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Victories
of the
Saints

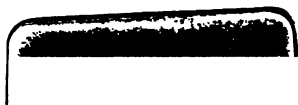
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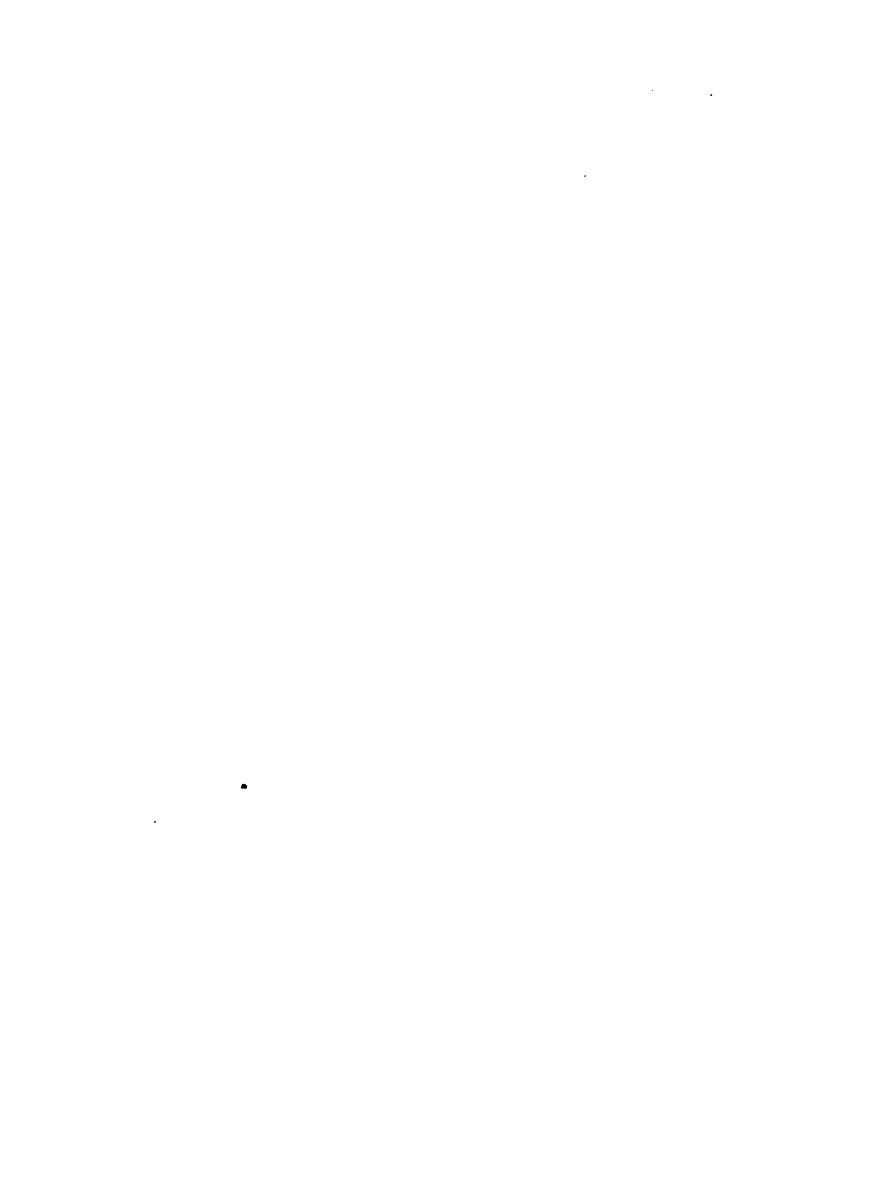


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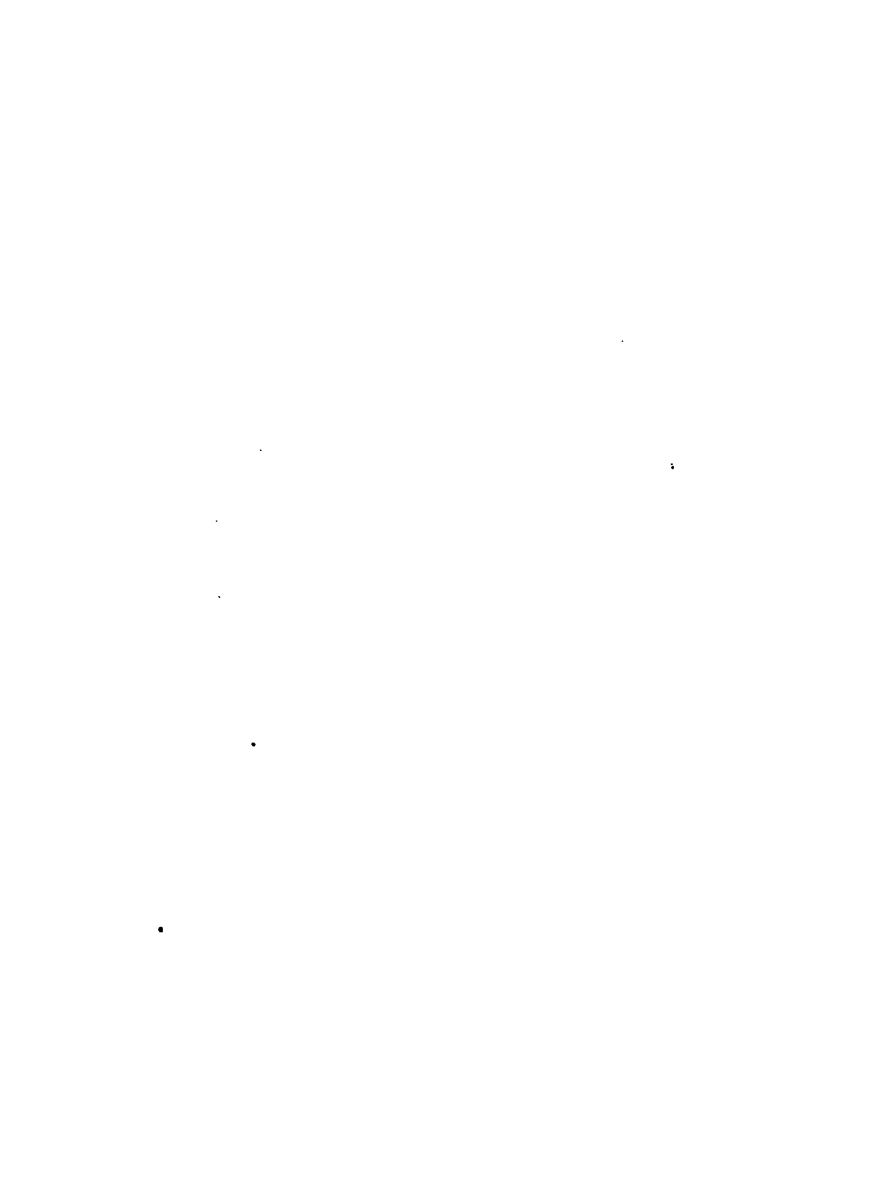
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VICTORIES
OF
THE SAINTS:

STORIES FOR CHILDREN

From Church History.

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PREFACE.

THE following stories are of precisely the same character as those in my *Triumphs of the Cross* and *Deeds of Faith*. I hope that this fourth attempt to interest children in Church history may not be less adapted to them than the three former.

The authority for the *first* and the *second* of the stories is the life of S. Gregory the Wonderworker, by S. Gregory Nyssen; for the *third*, the second hymn of the Peristephanon of Prudentius, the 80th (or 82nd) Epistle of S. Cyprian, the Sermons of S. Augustine on the subject, and the remarkable gems published by Arevalus, in his edition of Prudentius. I have represented S. Sixtus as beheaded, in agreement with the ordinary tradition of the Church. Prudentius, however, speaks of his crucifixion. Pamelius, in his notes on the 82nd Epistle of

S. Cyprian, endeavours to explain away the words of Prudentius: and with him agrees Mariettus; as also Gallonius, in the *Torments of the Martyrs*, pp. 65, 66. But an ancient hymn, preserved by Cardinal Thomasius (*Opp.* ii, 393) speaks of the crucifixion of S. Sixtus in express terms: *fixus in ligno crucis*. Still, the account of the whole, the very speech of S. Sixtus, the implied meaning of S. Cyprian, seem to me to leave little doubt that the Bishop of Rome was beheaded.

For the *fourth* and *fifth* stories, the authority is the *Acta Sincera*, as published by Ruinart, documents as authentic as the Law Reports of our own day; for the *sixth*, Sozomen (lib. vii, cap. 15) and Socratès (lib. vi, cap. 16), in their Ecclesiastical Histories. The martyrdom of S. Cyrilla, however, really occurred in Cyrene, in the Great Tenth Persecution. The *seventh* is related as a fact by Walker, in his *Sufferings of the Clergy* (p. 406), on the authority, it is believed, of Bishop Hall.

I may perhaps say, that I could adduce

authorities (were they not out of place) for the minutest details in the description of houses, furniture, dress, and the like, which are so necessary to stories of this kind. When the scene lies in Asia Minor, the confusion between, and admixture of, Greek and Roman usages, has occasioned me a good deal of trouble ; but I believe that the statements made may all be justified by the authorities of S. Chrysostom, S. Basil, and Libanius.

SACKVILLE COLLEGE,
Michaelmas, 1850.

CHRIST, Thy soldiers' palm of honor,
To Thy City bright and free
Lead me, when my warfare's girdle
I shall cast away from me ;
A partaker in Thy bounty
With Thy Blessed Ones to be.

Grant me vigor, while I labor,
In the ceaseless battle pressed,
That Thou may'st, the conflict over,
Grant me everlasting rest ;
And I may at length inherit
Thee my portion ever blest.

S. PETER DAMIANI.

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THE
PLAGUE OF NEOCÆSAREA.

A.D. 252.

IT has not always pleased God that the greatest of His servants should be called to the highest stations in His Church. S. Augustine, the great doctor of the West, was only bishop of a poor little town named Hippo, on the north coast of Africa. S. Jerome, one of the most famous teachers in the fold of CHRIST, was never a bishop at all. S. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the shining lights of the East, spent the greater part of his life either in the desert, or in a miserable city, of which, but for him, we should scarcely have heard. And so it was with another Gregory, of whom I have told you before, and am now going to tell you another story: him, I mean, whom for his mighty power of miracles the Church has called the Wonder-worker, and who was bishop of Neocæsarea, in Pontus.

All was joy and confusion in the little town. Oxen, crowned with flowers, were led through the streets; slaves hurried hither and

thither with messages and invitations; the doors of many houses were wreathed with garlands, shewing that there would be a banquet within in the afternoon; here you might meet a procession of maidens, their long dark hair braided back from their foreheads, and floating loosely over their shoulders, their pallas of snowy whiteness; they are advancing to the great temple, and singing hymns to the king of gods and men. It was the city festival of Jupiter; and still, the nearer that we go to his house, the more crowded we shall find the streets, the louder we shall hear the hymns; the blood of the slaughtered victims trickles slowly along the streets; trumpets and clarions bray out together, and incense leaves its long lazy trail of sweetness in the air. The city was wholly given to idolatry. There were, it is true, some few Christians within its walls; there had been seventeen when S. Gregory became bishop, and they were now rather increased; but still, they were like a very little flock of sheep in the midst of wolves. The prayers and watchings and fastings of the good bishop, his sermons and his miracles, had been, to all appearance, thrown away. Perhaps he sometimes spoke as the prophet: "Then I said, I have laboured for nought, I have spent my strength in vain"; but if he did, I am sure that his faith made him

also go on as the prophet does : " Yet is my reward with the LORD, and my recompense with my God."

" A fair day to you, Eumolpus," said a young man, dressed in the height of the fashion, to a friend whom he overtook in the street of Vesta. He wore his *lacerna* of all the colours of the rainbow ; its clasps were of gold ; the hood was bordered with precious fur ; his shoes were of scarlet cloth, turned up at the toe, and studded with gems. Not being a senator, he could not wear the silver crescent on his instep ; but his shoemaker, Marcus Fulvio, a man of great ability in his way, had arranged a set of pearls so as very much to resemble that ornament. I mention this, partly that you may the better imagine what were the riches and luxury of the great Roman empire, when such things were done in the country town of a distant province ; and partly, because in introducing Florentius Turbo to you, I certainly ought not to forget that on which he valued himself more than on anything else ; namely, his dress and general appearance.

" By *the*," cried Eumolpus, using the fashionable form of an oath, " but you startled me !"

" Thinking of the horse that you have to run this morning, I suppose," said his friend. " Guess what I saw just now."

"Nay, how should I know?"

"Why, that miserable fellow Gregory,—his right name, they say, is Theodore, though,—skulking down a lane out of the way of the crowd. I wonder what mischief he is set on now."

"Thanks to the gods," remarked Eumolpus, "and thanks to common sense, that folly will not go down in our city. No worshipping the Ass's Head here."

"No, no," returned Florentius. "But, I say, did you ever see the streets fuller? In some places, they tell me, there is a great falling off in the attendance at these sacrifices. No one can say that here."

"I should think not," said his friend. "The Consular has been here some days, has he not?"

"Yes; I supped with him yesterday at Marcus Varro's. By the by, I never saw such woodcocks before."

"They are caught and fatted, I know," said Eumolpus. "But who is that coming round the corner yonder, by the Temple of Juno?"

A very handsome *lectica*, of satin-wood, hung with curtains of pink silk, and carried on the shoulders of six slaves, turned into the street. Two *cursores* (running footmen) went before it,

to make way in the crowd. On the mattress, which was of purple cloth, stuffed with roses, reclined a lady, clearly, by her rich *instita*, and the embroidery on her *palla*, of high rank.

"*Medius fidius!*" cried Florentius Turbo, "it is the Consular's wife. I must speak to her." I should tell you that by the word Consular he meant Proprætor of Bithynia.

The two friends quickened their pace, and came up with the litter. "The gods preserve the excellent Pomponia!" said Florentius.

"And you also, noble Turbo," replied the lady. "You are for the temple?"

"And for the amphitheatre also. The Consular, I hear, is before us."

"Yes," said Pomponia; "they would have him for the first sacrifice. And, indeed, he felt that he ought to be there; for these Nazarene ideas about the immortal gods must not have any colour given for their spread."

"Aye," replied Florentius, "public duties must be attended to. But this is an unpleasant day to preside at a sacrifice."

"It is very sultry," said Pomponia; "there is not a breath of air. I think we must be going to have a storm."

"I have thought so for several days," replied the other. "There has been no wind, and a kind

of gray haze that I never remember to have seen before. The sun is as pale and sickly-looking as if chaos were coming again."

"By the twin goddesses," cried the Proprætor's wife, "how can you talk so?—you are enough to frighten one."

"Far be that from me, lady," replied Turbo. "But it is strange weather, you must allow."

"Did you see that light last night?" inquired Eumolpus.

"No," said Florentius. "What was it?"

"A long pale arch, stretching from one side of the sky to the other. It was clear enough to be seen; but yet so thin, that the stars twinkled through it."

"Yes, sir," remarked Zosimus, an old slave, who was one of the litter bearers, "I saw one like that about a month before the death of the god Alexander."

"Sirrah," said Florentius with a laugh, "if you are for making a god of Gallus, the Consular must look to you."

The slave did not answer; and the whole party now turned into the great square of Jupiter, which lay before his temple. There we will leave them to mingle with the priests, soothsayers, augurs, musicians, and worshippers, who crowded the space in front of the building, and the marble

steps themselves. For I must take you to another part of the city.

There was, close to the walls, a small house that stood at the end of the same lane of which Florentius Turbo was speaking a little while ago. Behind it was a garden plot, laid out with a good deal of taste, and now bright with the Pontic rose, the lily with its golden tongues, and the peony. Along the city wall was a trellised arcade, shaded by the clustering tendrils of vines, —a most pleasant shelter in such a sultry day. Yet even there also the air felt hot and sickly, and seemed as if it had lost all its freshness and all its spring.

Up and down this arcade there paced two men. One of them, with his reverend white hair, his kind, yet piercing eye, his very firm expression of mouth, which, nevertheless, every now and then relaxed into a smile, surpassing a woman's in sweetness, looked, as he was, a true Bishop of the Church of God. It was none other than Gregory the Wonder-worker. The other, a much younger man, tall, and well made, with a countenance full of gentleness and modesty, walked rather behind his companion.

"And so our dearly-loved brother Cyprian is in good health, is he?" inquired S. Gregory. "I long to see him; but that will not be on earth."

"He is in good health, my father," replied Marcellinus, S. Cyprian's deacon; "but sorely weighed down with the care of all the African churches; and with this new question about the baptism of heretics." Marcellinus, like S. Gregory, spoke Greek, but he spoke it with a very foreign accent.

"He sent then no letters by you, my son?"

"He dared not write to your Blessedness, because the persecution was so vehement in Africa, and we heard that it was so here. But he gave me what I should principally consult you on in this question; and he bade me say that, though he was absent in the flesh, he was with you in the spirit; and that he continually remembered you in the Holy Sacrifice."

"See now, my son," said Gregory, "how glorious a thing is this that we believe, the Communion of Saints! He and I have never met in the flesh: yet we love each other, yet we pray for each other, yet we joy or sorrow with each other; and dwelling far apart on earth, shall yet live together for ever in the joy of our Lord. Touching that same question of re-baptism, we will speak of it as the Lord shall give us wisdom: only thus much will I now say; that, if I do not altogether hold with the bishops of Africa, who teach that heretics are to be re-baptized, still less

do I hold with my brother Stephen of Rome, who threatens to excommunicate them for their belief.—Do you hear that shout?”

“Aye, my father,” replied the deacon. “It must be from the amphitheatre.”

“It is so,” said Gregory. “I have a message to send thither anon. Sad times, and yet glorious, are coming over the city.” And the old man seemed quite lost for a few moments in prayer.

The door that led from the house to the garden opened, and a boy,—for he yet wore the *toga prætexta*, like a girl,—came forth. He was the son of the Christian widow to whom the house belonged; and he crossed the grass plot to S. Gregory, with a look half of deep respect, half of playfulness.

“Have you been to the amphitheatre, my son?” inquired the bishop.

“Of a truth have I, my father,” said young Theodotus, for so he was called. “For the sacrifice is over; much good may it do them and their gods.”

“Nay, my son, we speak not so of such abominations. But what fell out at the amphitheatre?”

“Before the game began,” replied the boy, somewhat abashed, “the people were so crowded

together, that in the fulness of their delight, they cried out as one man: 'Give us room, good Jupiter, give us room.'"

"Hearken, my son, I have an errand for you to the amphitheatre. Step this way with me, and I will tell you what it is."

Gregory took the boy aside with him for a few moments, and then said: "Now go, and the LORD be with you."

Theodotus accordingly set forth. He passed the deserted streets, that seemed almost more sultry in their loneliness than they had been when thronged with the multitudes of the morning, and made his way to the gate of Mars: for beyond that lay the amphitheatre. The seats, piled up one above the other, and formed, not out of stone, but from a heaped mound of earth, might hold some ten thousand persons; and as the boy came up to the vomitory (or outer door), a long loud shout pealed forth, at some feat of skill or strength, from every part of the building. But he went on without fear. Gregory had told him that no harm should happen to him; but without that assurance he would still have done his errand cheerfully. He entered, and passed through a short passage of wood-work, very much like—I am speaking to you who have ever been on the Thames at London—those passages by which you go down from

the various quays to the floating landing-places. And when he came on to the stage, where a famous gladiator, Chæretapus, had just slaughtered an enormous bear, the people, crowded together and suffering from the heat of the day, yet in high glee, shouted out again, "More room, great Jupiter! give us more room!" Theodotus stood still, and said in his clear childish voice, that could be heard in any part of the theatre: "Thus saith Gregory, bishop of this church: in a few days ye shall have room enough, and to spare." Then he turned, and hurried out, as he had been told, with all speed.

For two or three moments you might have heard a pin drop. Every one looked at his neighbour. What had passed almost seemed a vision. At last, the proprætor, turning to an edile, who stood beside him, said angrily:

"What means this?"

"May it please your splendour," said the man, "I never saw the youth before."

"Let strict inquiry be made after him," said the Consular, "that he may be punished as he deserves. Who is this Gregory of whom he spoke?"

"He is a bishop of the Christians, my lord," replied Florentius Turbo, who happened to be seated next the proprætor, "a very mischief-mak-

ing fellow. I marvel he has never met with his deserts before."

"He shall now," said the governor. "I will look to him to-morrow before I leave the city. Editor, let the *meridiani* come on." (They were inferior gladiators, who fought towards the middle of the day.)

Now I will pass over two days.

It was a sultry and gloomy evening; the sun had set about a quarter of an hour; the Amazonian mountains to the north, and Anti-Taurus to the south, glowed in an intense ghastly purple hue; the plains that surrounded Neocæsarea were almost lost in a leaden-coloured obscurity; the air was thick and heavy; men wondered that the storm so long threatening did not come on. By the Comanagate, on the outside of the wall, a crowd of the citizens were assembled, but stragglingly, and on each side of the road, as if they expected some sight to pass that way. Further from the wall rose a high dark tower-like looking object; you would have been puzzled to guess for what it could be intended; but it was no strange sight in those days. It was a funeral pile, for the burning of some corpse.

Among the crowd, Florentius Turbo and Eumolpus were also standing. Let us listen to what they are saying. .

"Sudden? it is sudden indeed!" said Florentius. "Why, the Consular was quite well at the games,—at least, I thought so,—and dead before midnight."

"So it has been in other cases. This new disease seems quite to puzzle the physicians. You are going to the pile?"

"Yes," replied the other, who was entirely, like Eumolpus, dressed in black. "They are past the time: it was to be at sunset."

"Why, it will be a long procession," said his friend. "People seem very much alarmed."

"Yes; I noticed at the amphitheatre, that the boy's speech threw quite a gloom over all that followed. Everything afterwards was flat. I wonder if there was anything in it."

"Pshaw! Why, Turbo, you are not going to turn Christian?"

"Not I, by the twelve gods! But there may be magic in it, you know. It was certainly strange: first the message, and then the plague."

"A mere guess—a chance. But here they come."

From the gate of the city the procession issued forth. Flutes breathed softly, and trumpets pealed, as the musicians passed along. Then came the buffoons, laughing and jesting with the mob:—one of them was dressed like the Consu-

lar, and mimicked his walk and way of talking. Next followed the slaves;—and then the images of the Proprætor and of his ancestors, carried on poles. Close behind them was the bier :—and on it the pale stiff form of the Consular. A herald proclaimed that it was Marcus Attilius Piso, once Prætor, twice Consul, Procurator of Lycia, Pro-Consul of Cœlosyria, Proprætor of Bithynia, Præfect of the Hadriatic Fleet, twice Imperator. Such were his titles. That cheek would once have flushed to hear them: see how ghastly in the deepening twilight it is now!—And by the bier, Pomponia is walking, with her two daughters. Look at them well. They are all muffled in the black palla: but the two girls are bare-headed, and have allowed their long hair to hang loosely over their shoulders. There is the wailing of the hired women, the sobs of the widow and the daughters, the solemn tread of the magistrates and rich citizens, as they came on behind, the tramp of the soldiery. But there is not a single voice to say, amongst all the pomp and ceremony of death,—“He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live!” No: the priests have said something about the Elysian fields; the orator in the market-place spoke about Achilles and Hector, and Romulus and Scipio :—but priests and orator knew they were

lying. They were paid for speaking, and they spoke. As to the better sort of citizens, what could they say? They could only shake their heads, and whisper, that if there were any future state, Attilius had been a good governor on the whole, and might possibly be happy: the great gods knew; they could not tell.

But stop! I said there was no comfort in this scene. Let us watch Paullina, the Consular's younger daughter. Did you not see, as she passed that image of Mercury,—yonder I mean, by that old stunted plane-tree,—did you not see that she made the sign of the Cross, quickly indeed, but very decidedly? She must be a Christian. She is weeping bitterly, poor girl: yes, and she has cause to weep. She knows that she can only leave her father to the infinite mercies of God. She knows,—for Gregory told her so, when, only this morning, she went to him,—that the Judge of all the earth shall do right. But her hope is so faint of future happiness for him, that it can hardly be called hope. Once during the few hours of his illness, she was left alone with him for a moment,—and she said softly, “Oh, my father, if you would but believe as Christians do!” And he only answered angrily, “What! worship the Crucified?” Those were the last words,—except idle ravings, which he

uttered. No, Paullina; you cannot be comforted.

The weary procession is at an end. The bier is set on the ground by the pile. The poor corpse, in the gorgeous *toga prætexta*—the magistrate's robe—is lifted on to the wood. The slaves are bringing their torches forward. The highest magistrate present, the Procurator of the district, comes forward, and calls three times on the Proconsul. "Marcus Attilius Varro!" he said, in a clear loud voice. There was a pause of such stillness that you might hear the Lycus murmuring along its bed. "Marcus Attilius Varro!" The widow and the orphans are weeping more bitterly than ever: for they know what is coming next. The third time he cried, "Marcus Attilius Varro! hail and farewell!" Then stepping back, he said in the usual form to those that stood about, *Conclamatus est*.

The slaves now came round, and offered a torch to Pomponia and to her daughters. The Procurator said in a kindly voice, "You had better come round to this side; the wind is from the south." Hardly knowing what they did, they followed his advice. Then, with trembling hands, and heads turned away, they thrust their torches into the pile.

It was now dark. But presently the flame

leapt up: the pine-logs crackled and snapped: a pale yellow glare fell on the faces of the crowd;—the clouds above kindled into a lowering red;—the grove of cypresses hard by threw fantastic shadows on the sward from stem and branch and leaf:—the city glowed with a mournful brightness in the distance.

Paullina saw none of these things. She hid her face in the palla, and thought of that last terrible account.

Let another week have passed by.

"I can bear this no longer," said Eumolpus to Florentius, as he met him in the street one afternoon. "I leave the city this evening."

"Leave it? For what purpose? The plague is everywhere. At Mirones, and Tebenda, and Pidis, they are burning them by thirty and forty a-day."

"I must leave it,—I cannot bear it,—it will drive me mad. Look at those miserable wretches clustering round the fountain of Apollo! dying and dead together!—they tell stories that make one's blood run cold."

"Have you heard that last night a demon, or genius, or spectre, entered into several houses in the street of Augustus, and that wherever he went, there has been a death this morning?"

"Don't speak of it! don't speak of it! Yes:

I have heard it. I met a wretch even now,—with scarcely any clothes on; I saw the plague spot on his breast; and he cried out with a lamentable voice,—‘Out of the way! out of the way! don’t you see that I am going to the tomb?’”

“Several have done so,” replied his friend. “They go to the monuments and die there. But here, we are nearly at my house: come in with me and take a glass of Chian. We will talk there about going. I am disposed to join you.”

“I will come in for a moment,” replied Eumolpus, “for I feel a strange sinking *here*,” and he laid his hand on his chest.—“Give me your arm,” he added, in a few moments: “a kind of faintness has come over me.”

“Keep up your spirits, man; keep up your spirits!” cried Florentius.—“You will have nothing to do with Charon yet.”

“Turbo,” said Eumolpus faintly, “I can scarcely walk; I am very ill.”

“It can’t be,” cried Florentius, slipping his arm from his friend’s,—“it surely can’t be that you are seized?”

“I believe I am,” groaned Eumolpus.

“Nay then, Jove guard you!” cried the other; “I must take care of myself.” And he crossed to the opposite side of the street.

“You seem ill, sir,” said a young man, who at

this moment came up, and who spoke kindly, but in a foreign accent. "Can I help you?"

"Off! off!" said the miserable man. "I am struck with the plague."

"The more reason I should help you home," said the deacon Marcellinus, for he it was, "if it be so."

"Are you in love with death?" inquired Eumolpus almost angrily, as his new friend half led, half supported him forwards.

"We Christians have no great cause to dread that which opens to us a better life."

"A Christian? that explains it. My house is at the other end of the city:—I cannot reach it."

"Let us get assistance, and we will carry you. Good fellow," he said, to a poor man passing, "I will pay you well if you will help me carry this gentleman home."

"Fool!" cried the man. "Don't you see he has the plague?"

"Then you must come to my home," said the deacon. "This way—down this lane,"—he continued; and turned down it. Eumolpus was scarcely conscious when they reached the abode of S. Gregory.

The time of mercy was at an end. The reckoning was called for; the Master was come.

The good Bishop received the dying heathen like the true servant of Him Who came to seek and to save that which was lost. He even at the last moment tried to lead him to One That is able to save to the uttermost. But delirium came on in less than an hour from the time that Eumolpus was first seized. They sent for a physician, but he never came. Deserted by all his former friends, the rich man lay in a poor cottage, attended only by the Christian widow, Tertia. From time to time, Marcellinus came in to see if any word of comfort might be spoken : and more than once Gregory himself stood by the bedside of the sufferer, when he could spare a few moments from the members of his own flock, whose race was nearly over.

In the mean while, the disease ran on. At one time, Eumolpus could hardly be restrained in his frenzied desire of throwing off all covering and rushing to the river. Then he raved of past events and bye-gone times ; he was with his friends, he was at the banquet, he was in scenes of wickedness, he was reciting the crimes of other days, he was repeating, such as they were, their pleasures. But towards sunset he became quieter ; he lay muttering half-pronounced words to himself ; he seemed sometimes to recognize terrible faces and forms in the room ; he busied himself

in picking and pulling the bed clothes ; and Tertia, who had nursed many a dying man, went forth to tell the bishop that the end was near.

Gregory entered the room. The last ray of the sun streamed redly in ; and Eumolpus opened his eyes, and endeavoured to sit up.

"Where am I?" he said. "I remember. A Christian brought me in here. I am going very fast."

"You are, my son," replied the bishop gravely. "And have you thought where?"

"What is the use of thinking where?" asked Eumolpus faintly. "Who can tell?"

"You might tell, my son, if you so willed," answered Gregory. "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved."

"No," said the dying man. "If there be another life, which I don't believe, and I won't believe, I am lost. If there be any gods, they must punish me."

"There is but one God," said Gregory ; "believe in Him, and He will yet pardon you, let your sins have been what they may. Oh, my son ! all the future hangs on these few moments ! Only call on our LORD JESUS CHRIST ! only confess Him now, and He will confess you then !"

"Confess the Crucified !" cried Eumolpus, raising himself with an effort. "Never, never !"

He stretched out his hands as if waving something off—a rattling sound was heard in his throat—a gray shade came on his face—and all was over.

Let us go into another sick room in that same city.

A widow, whose swollen eyes and pale cheeks tell how much she has suffered, is moistening the parched lips and burning forehead of her daughter. We have seen her before—it is Pomponia.

“Oh, Paullina!” she cried; “O my darling child! what have I done that the gods should visit me so?”

Paullina heard not. In her delirium she had more than once confessed herself a Christian; for hitherto, by the advice of S. Gregory, she had kept her faith a secret from all. Her mother and her sister were left alone in the house; the servants fled; Leonilla was manifestly sickening; Paullina was sinking fast; and Pomponia hurried from one to the other, beating her breast, and tearing her hair, in a frenzy of agony,

“Paullina!” she said again, “Paullina! do you not know your own mother, my darling child? Speak to me, Paullina! I cannot lose you, I will not lose you! O Apollo, spare but my child, and I vow a hecatomb at thy altar.”

“Dear mother,” said Paullina faintly.

"My own child."

"Do what I am going to ask you, dear mother; I know you will not refuse me. I am a Christian; I think I have said so when I knew not well what I was saying. Dear mother, send for our Bishop Gregory."

Pomponia hid her face, and sobbed aloud.

"Will not you, dearest mother? will you not do the last thing for your poor child that she will be able to ask? Send to him, mother, and listen to him, and you will not grieve for me."

"I *will* send for him," said Pomponia, and she left the room. With some difficulty she found a man who promised to take the message, and then she returned.

"Where is Leonilla?" said Paullina. And as she spoke, her sister entered the room, pale, trembling, hardly able to support herself, the very image of a plague-struck person, and sank down in a chair.

"Mother! Leonilla!" said the dying Paullina, "listen to me. I am going to be happy; I am going to see Him That died for me; Whose I am, and Whom I serve. Will you not be His also!"

"How can He save us?" said Leonilla listlessly. "He does not even save you."

"Because He is going to take me to Himself, my sister. Hear what our bishop can say. I

know you wish to see me again. Believe in our LORD, and you shall."

"Oh, that I could believe what you say!" cried Pomponia.

Paullina seemed for some minutes to be praying earnestly. Then she said, "Stoop down and kiss me, dear mother. I know, I am sure, that He will hear my prayer. I shall not live till the bishop comes—but he will come." They thought she was wandering, because she presently said what they could not understand; if we had been by, we should have known better. Her words were: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the LAMB was the light thereof."

A few moments of silence,—one gentle sigh,—and the spirit of Paullina went to behold that light.

Almost at the same moment the steps of Gregory were heard on the stairs; for he was used, in the last few days, to deserted houses, and had made his way in. The door stood open, and he entered the room.

"Oh, sir," sobbed Pomponia. "My darling child! My pet lamb!"

"Is she at rest?" asked S. Gregory, going to the bed-side, and looking down on the pale face.

He paused, and then said: "If you could but for one moment know what she is now seeing, you would not grieve for her, but for yourself."

"How am I to know it?" asked Pomponia.

"Because He hath said so, Who cannot lie," replied the bishop. "He has called her to Himself. He wills that you should follow her. He says to you by me, what He said Himself when He was on earth: 'Weep not: the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.'"

"Let Him save my other child," cried the poor mother, pointing to Leonilla, who was leaning back in her chair, nearly unconscious of what was passing. "Let Him save Leonilla, and I will believe in Him."

"They are more blessed who have not seen, and yet have believed," said Gregory. "But He will not quench the smoking flax. See now what His power is." He went up to Leonilla, took her burning hand in his left hand, made the sign of the Cross with his right, and said: "Leonilla, in the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, be made whole of thy disease."

The heavy eyes opened; the purple flush faded from the cheeks; the sickness, which no art of physicians could heal, was rebuked by the faith of one bishop. They looked at each other, the

mother and daughter, as if they could scarcely trust their sight; then with one accord they fell on their knees, and besought Gregory to expound to them the way of truth more perfectly.

And when, some half hour afterwards, he went forth, the fame of his miracle had gone before him. They who a few days ago had spoken of burning him, now crowded round him, eager to be the first to whose house he would come. It was to cure a mother, a sister, a son; and wherever he went, the sickness fled. Some there were who, in the hardness of their hearts, refused even at the last to send for him; and they justly perished in their sin. Florentius Turbo heard of the wonder. "I had rather fly from the plague," he said, "than trust a juggler to cure it." So he made ready his chariot and horses, and left the city. But the plague had seized him already, and his body lay by the way-side a prey to the dogs.

Neocæsarea received the faith, at once and for ever. And when, twelve years afterwards, S. Gregory went to his crown, he who had found but seventeen Christians, left but seventeen Pagans, in the city.

THE SEALED FOUNTAIN.

CIRC. A.D. 256.

You wish for another story of S. Gregory the Wonder-worker? Most certainly there is no difficulty in telling you many more of his wonderful deeds; for none of the Saints of the Most High, since the time of the Apostles, had ever so large a measure of the gift of miracles. Indeed, while he lived, it seemed as if S. Peter or S. Paul had come again on earth; for the wonders that he wrought brought back to remembrance the mighty deeds of those two great Apostles.

You have heard how Neocæsarea received the true faith. But all those who professed it did not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, crept in among them; many forgot that they were soldiers of Him Who was crowned, not with gold, but with thorns; and clung to the world with all their hearts, not remembering that it is written: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

One such Christian was Fulvius Aper, into whose garden I will presently take you. But first, I must tell you that his father was a Roman Senator, who had a large estate at Neocæsarea, where he settled, and where also he died. His houses and lands he left to his two sons, and they had disputed fiercely in the division of them ; nor was the partition yet quite settled.

It was a hot cloudless July day. There was not a breath of wind to stir the tall plane trees of Aper's shrubbery. The white marble statues, set here and there among them, glittered like the finest snow. You might see Cicero, as he was when speaking in the Senate-house ; and Horace, with a wreath of ivy round his head, and a lyre in his hand ; and Seneca, the philosopher, a very popular writer with the Romans of that time ; and the poet Statius, whose works were also very much admired. A terrace ran along, from the shrubbery, in front of the house ; and sloping from that, down a gentle hill (for the place was some half a mile from Neocæsarea), was the garden. It was laid out in formal plots, squares, triangles, and circles ; there were little lawns, with quaintly cut trees, peacocks in box, and lions in laurel ; and look, at

this very moment, one of the *topiarii*,—the slave whose business it was,—is trimming away a few unnecessary twigs from the neck of that camel cut out in the myrtle-tree yonder. There is a stronger scent from aromatic herbs, as the sun sucks up their sweetness, than we should think fitting an English flower-garden : for marjoram, and thyme, and rosemary, are planted everywhere. And each tiny square or circle of flowers is watered by its own little canal of white marble, along which the water now glitters pleasantly, as it runs forward to join the distant Lycus ; but at evening will be turned off to refresh the drooping plants, and make them give out their full sweetness to the calm twilight air. These all have their origin from that superb reservoir at one side of the garden. The basin, of Carystian marble, pale with iron veins, flings up a thousand little streams that seem turned into precious stones as they glitter in the sun, and then fall into the dark red reservoir of jasper, and are thence dispersed over the garden. Those Tritons, at the edge of the reservoir, are considered masterpieces of art ; they came from Athens, and cost the father of Fulvius Aper sixty sestertia — more than five thousand pounds.

How quiet and idle a scene it is ! All through this rich Pontic valley, which promises a glorious

harvest to its second crop of wheat, there is not a labourer to be seen. One heavy low cart creaks on its flat spokeless wheels along the road to Comana; but except that, all is silence. The peasants will come back to their labour two or three hours hence; but now they are resting in their cottages, here and there among the fields; and happy he who has the broad leaves of the gourd or cucumber to creep over his roof; or better still, a lime or plane to hang with its delicious shade over the whole house!

Fulvius Aper is lying in a couch in the shrubbery. A little table is at his elbow, whereon stands a goblet of iced Chian: iced, not in the way which we now use, but with the lumps of clear bright ice floating in the wine itself. He has thrown off the girdle of his tunic, and it hangs loosely about him; his sleeves, according to the last fashion, have parti-coloured fringes, and his toga has folds enough to make two. I should say that Fulvius Aper looks as little like one of those early Christians, out of whom the martyrs and confessors, whom we reverence, were made, as any exquisitely fashionable young nobleman of the present time. But he was one, nevertheless; and he lived in an age of persecution; though just at that particular time, in the early part of Valerian's reign, the *Church* had peace. So hard is it to walk in the

midst of an adulterous and sinful generation without offence !

On another couch, at a little distance from that of Fulvius, his wife Flavia is resting. She has some tapestry-work in hand, and two young slaves, seated on two stools by her side, are busily plying their needles in carrying the same piece on. As I think, they are working the story of Hercules and the battle by the Lake of Lerna. For some time all is still, but the hum of a single bee buzzing round the lime-tree. At last a thought seems to strike Aper :

"Guess, if you can, Flavia, what fresh demand this insolent brother of mine has been making?"

"What might it be?" she answered, carelessly.

"Why, by Jupiter—psha !—I *will* get rid of these oaths—Gregory is perpetually rebuking me for them—by Mars I will !—he lays claim to the reservoir and fountains. He says that the ground there is his, and should be enclosed in his garden."

"I wish," said Flavia, "that they would send him to Anticyra" (the usual wish for madmen). "He have the reservoir ! Why, it is the handsomest thing that belonged to your father. And what use would the garden be without it?"

"Very true, my little heart," replied her hus-

band. "Well, here he has sent me a legal notice that he claims it; and that meddling rogue, Aristocrates the lawyer, brought it up. But he shall not have it, that is certain. I'll consult Labeo this afternoon, when it gets a little cooler."

"I would," said Flavia. "Aglæ, if you are so careless, remember the cow-hide." Aglæ trembled, for Flavia seldom threatened in vain.

There was silence again for some time. The excessive heat of the day began to pass off. The labourers came back to the fields. The gardener went out among his flowers. Here and there a thrush ventured to sing; and the soft northerly wind, breathing gently from the Black Sea, began to stir the branches of the plane grove.

"What's all that noise?" cried Aper, as a strange tumult rose all at once from the further end of the garden. "Aglæ, run and see!" For the shrubbery was too thickly planted to allow Fulvius to look for himself.

Aglæ went, and presently returned out of breath. "My lord," she cried, "there is my lord your brother, and several of his servants, by the reservoir; and Diphilus, the steward, and the gardener, and several of our slaves, quarrelling with them."

"By Hercules!" exclaimed her master, "this must be looked to!" And hastily girding up his

tunic, he hurried out of the shrubbery, and across the garden.

Before he reached the reservoir, he heard loud shouts and threats. "Stand back, sir, it is none of yours!" cried Diphilus, the steward. "Break his head, some of you!" shouted Lucius Aper, the brother.

"Keep your temper, sir," whispered Aristocrates the lawyer; "we must not give any advantage."

"Geta, if you touch that Triton, I'll make my mattock and your head acquainted," cried Mennas, the gardener. "Here's my lord. My lord, these slaves"——

"My lord," interrupted Aristocrates.

"Silence, sir!" roared Fulvius. "What is the meaning of this disturbance, Lucius? What are you doing in my grounds? By Castor, sir, you are a disgrace to our father's name."

"I am come for what is my own," cried Lucius, "and I will have it. From yonder corner, Aristocrates, to this angle. Draw the line straight."

"Run for more of the slaves, Diphilus," said Fulvius, whose party was much the smaller.

"Geta, home as fast as may be," commanded Lucius. "Bid them all to come. We will not be baffled. In the mean time, stand back, fellows, and let us do our business."

"To the crows with standing back!" cried the

slaves of Fulvius, who saw that help was coming to them from the house.

"Drive them out! knock them down!" shouted Fulvius, almost beside himself with passion.

One or two heavy blows were given and taken, and blood would certainly have been shed, had not a very unexpected visitor appeared in the garden.

"What is the matter, my children?" asked the calm, clear voice of Gregory, who, wrapped in his philosopher's cloak, and leaning on his staff, came forward into the midst. It was some time before he could obtain an answer to the question, so loud and fierce were the two disputants in asserting their rights.

"The well is mine by my father's will," said Lucius.

"It is false!" retorted Fulvius; "it has always belonged to this garden, and the garden was left to me."

"It shall belong to it no more," replied the other, with, however, rather a softened voice; for the bishop's presence acted as a check on all, even on the heathen lawyer and on the slaves.

"Then, as I understand," said Gregory, "this dispute that has set two Christians in arms against each other, is touching this beautiful spring of water."

There was an expression of assent.

"Had either of you," proceeded the bishop, "had in yourselves the fountain of living water, you would not thus have disputed concerning a spring of which whosoever drinketh shall thirst again. You have both sinned in this matter, and shall both be fitly punished."

He advanced to the fountain: there was silence all around. The rays of the sun, now shining from the west, wove a fairy network of jewel-like light among the drops that played upward, and then fell with a pleasant splashing sound into the reservoir. Each drop, in its short journey, seemed changed into a thousand hues, one after the other: just as the soul of a saint, like Gregory, in his passage through this world, reflects a thousand different beauties of that Sun of Righteousness from whom all its light is derived.

Gregory stood by the side of the basin, and, stretching forth his hand over it, he made the sign of the Cross.

"Creature of God!" said he; "I command thee, in the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, that thy waters be dried up."

That instant the shower of jewels ceased; the sun's rays fell on a dry and useless basin. The water-springs had heard the command, and obeyed.

Fulvius and Lucius looked on, ashamed and confounded. For a moment they stood irresolute what to do, and then rushed into each other's arms.

"God's blessing be with you, my sons," said Gregory; "well for you both it is that this earthly spring was dried up, if so you may attain to those rivers of pleasure which are at His right hand for evermore."

THE
MARTYRDOM OF S. LAURENCE.

A.D. 258.

It was very early on a hot morning in August ; the sun was but just risen ; but the sky without a cloud, and the hush of the air, promised a most sultry day. All is still as death in the streets of Rome ; the rays of the sun cannot penetrate them yet ; but one temple after another is brightening up into glory, and wearing the splendours of the morning on their heads, where their bases are still in the cool shade. You may see how the light gets lower and lower down on the Baths of Antoninus. The slaves there will soon have to be stirring ; for a day like this will bring them work enough. The houses on the Cælian Hill,—turn to your left and look up at it, as we go along this Via Appia,—they have caught the glow now. Before very long, the great city will awake to her life, her noise, her business, and her sin.

But those soldiers who are advancing so quickly by the tomb of Scipio, they must be bound on some important business ; you may tell it by their

rapid yet steady pace, their silence, their arms. They all wear the *sagum*,—the military cloak. Here, behind them, come the centurion and his *optio* (lieutenant). We shall now see what they are about.

"I have certain information from the prefect of the city," said the centurion, a grey-headed veteran, whose face was marked with more than one scar, "that they have met this morning in the cemetery beyond the Appian gate, and that the bishop, as they call him, will be there; now if we can get at him, our fortune is made. Let us catch him in the act, and the emperor will be well nigh as pleased as with another victory over the Persians."

"Well, well," said the officer, "what you say is very true, Pedius; but to the crows with me if I can see, or ever could, what particular harm these miserable wretches do. Poor fools! why, I once went to a meeting of theirs myself."

"You went, Acilius! Why what, in the name of Mars, did you go for?"

"Oh, that was in the god Philip's time, when there was no great harm in such things. You know they said he had a taste that way himself."

"I advise you to take care how *you* have a taste that way now," cried Pedius Blasius. "But what did you see or hear?"

"Why, the gods love me, I could not make out

much. There was an old man whom they called a priest; he wore a long white robe, something like the *flamen* of Jupiter, and he read a good many prayers for all sorts of people,—the emperor was one, as I remember,—and for some bishops, and for all the Catholic Church. What he meant by that, I couldn't think. And a younger man, whom they called a deacon, read a long list of people, whom they were to pray for, dead as well as living."

I suppose Acilius is speaking of reading the Diptychs, and of the general intercession for quick and dead.

"What, pray for the dead?" cried the centurion.

"So they told me," said Acilius. "But before that they read something about"—I will not speak of our LORD as the soldiers spoke of Him—"how He cured a blind man, they said. Oh, and they read part of a letter written by one Paul to the Romans; but I am sure they were different Romans from me; for, by the life of the emperor, not one single syllable could I understand."

I see Acilius must have heard the Epistle and Gospel, though he is not giving a very clear account of them.

"Well," said Pedius, "I hope you heard folly enough for one day. Anything else?"

"Why, no ; for the priest made a sort of proclamation that I could not understand, and a good many men at the bottom of the hall went out. As I was wondering what all this meant, comes one of the deacons, and asks me if I was a Catechumen. No, quoth I ; I am a Roman. He looked at me as if he did not understand for a moment, and at last said, that I must not behold the mysteries. So out I went."

"Aye," said the centurion ; "the care they have for their mysteries is wonderful. Depend upon it, there is some foul deed in what they are after. But we'll find it out."

"They give away a good deal of money," said Acilius ; "that I can bear witness to. There was a cousin of mine, who kept a barber's shop in the Via Salaria, and a good business he drove. Well, it was burnt down last year, and he must have been ruined, if they had not set him up."

"He is a Christian himself, I suppose," replied the centurion.

"I had rather not ask," said the other. "He is a good sort of fellow, any how."

By this time the soldiers were passing under the arch of Drusus.

"Not a word after we are through the gate," said the centurion to the optio. "We must take care not to give the alarm."

"All's right!" said the sentinel, as Pedius came up. "You will find a goodly number of them."

"On then, my men!" cried Blasius. And the party, leaving the Appian gate, advanced rapidly along the green sward which then lined the road, parched and dusty, under an August sun; and presently halted close to the place where the church of S. Sebastian now stands.

"Hereabouts is the entrance to the catacomb," said the centurion, speaking in a low, cautious voice. It was a wild waste, even then beginning to suffer from the frightful malaria, covered with tufts of grass rising from the puzzolano soil, parched and brown here, and rankly tufted there. A few shrubs were scattered about, and they sickly and dwarfed. By the side of one jungle of these, half hidden by it, half blocked by a heap of sandstone, was an excavation like a gravel-pit. There was no visible way into it, but by jumping in. It was deep and dark; but Pedius Blasius had been directed to the spot, and recognized it accordingly.

"Your hand, Caius," he said to one of the soldiers, as he half swung himself, half jumped into the pit. "You and Acilius follow me; the rest stay above; there may be some other way out of this place. Have you the torches, Acilius?" he added, when his companions had descended.

"Here they are," said the optio.

"Remove that stone," said the centurion, pointing to a slab of terra-cotta that lay against one of the sides of the pit. "By Mars, there is the passage! Quick, Caius! Lights, lights!"

The soldiers struck them. "Now then," cried Pedius, "follow me."

They entered the long narrow tunnel which ran under the ground. On each side, closed by a marble or stone slab, were the openings in which the bodies of the Christians lay. One after another, side by side, there they awaited the LORD's second coming. An innumerable host of martyrs slept in that place, and their resting-places were marked with the victorious palm. And those who had departed in peace, they also slumbered well among their more happy and more honoured brethren. There you might read many such an inscription as:—

"Nicephorus, a sweet soul, in the place of refreshment."

And,—

"Navira, in peace, a sweet soul, who lived sixteen years; a soul as sweet as honey. This epitaph was made by her friends.
The sign a ship."

And a ship was rudely sculptured at the side.
And,—

"In CHRIST. Pomponius the innocent; aged
six years, eight months, and four days.
He sleeps in peace."

And,—

"Sweet Faustina, mayest thou live in God."

But here and there even more solemn memorials met them. Little recesses in the wall contained a phial of the blood, a few ashes, or a few bones of the martyr who had been rent to pieces by the wild beasts, or had finished his earthly course in the flames. And now they heard low voices, and saw a faint light before them. A sharp turn in the passage, and the band of soldiers were among the men they sought.

There, at an altar rudely constructed in an arched recess,—it covers the remains of the martyred bishop S. Stephen,—stands Sixtus, Bishop of Rome, a venerable old man; his eye dim; his natural force abated with age. There he is; the stay of his people, the glory of the Church of that great city. At his side is a deacon, whose face, like S. Stephen's, is as the face of an angel. How else can I describe its gentleness, its faith, its perfect love? At some little distance, twenty or thirty Christians are assembled. There you may see the old grey-headed beggar, the young patrician lady, the slave, the merchant, all united together, all fortified with that Body and that

Blood which is their strength and their hope. For the holy mysteries are just over; the chalice and paten are on the altar, and S. Sixtus has turned round to speak one more word of comfort to his flock.

"It may be, brethren," said he, "that some of us now gathered together in this place shall set forth the Lord's death no more. It may be that we shall be called forth as athletes to the struggle wherein He Himself was crowned. O glorious affliction! that shall bring us to Him Whom the martyrs and confessors behold with unclouded eyes. Ye may suffer, but ye will exult; ye may perish, but ye know in Whom ye have believed; Satan shall conquer, yet shall be confounded; faith shall seem to perish, yet shall be crowned. Follow His example by whose 'confession' we are met. Let us follow him in tribulation who followed CHRIST to glory. God will spare us sinners, Who refuses nothing to His martyrs. God will show mercy to us on earth, Who calls them that are on high His friends. God will receive" —

There is a rush, a shout, and a scream. Sixtus is in the hands of the centurion and the optio.

"No use to resist," cried Pedius, as one or two of the men were advancing. "The place is surrounded. But we want none but your bishop,

and this is he. The rest, if they are wise, will fly while they may."

"My children," said Sixtus, as calmly as he had before been speaking, "remember that the LORD said, 'when they persecute you, flee.' Nay, Marcella, why should you weep? Is the Crown of Life so despicable a thing that we are not to contend for it to blood?"

"Oh, my father," said Laurence, the first of the seven Roman deacons, "whither are you going without your son? How can the bishop forsake his deacon? When did you offer the holy sacrifice without me? How have I offended you? Try me only, whether, as I have assisted you in life, I would shrink from you in death."

"My son," replied the Pope, "I am not leaving you. We that are old have a lighter contest; your trial will be more fiery and more glorious. Prepare to follow me on the third day."

"Come," cried Pedius Blasius, "we were not sent here to talk, but to do. Tie his arms, Caius, and have him out. There is scarcely room here."

They dragged the bishop onward; the little congregation of the faithful following. He only, among them all, had an unmoved countenance.

The bloody scene was soon over. At the entrance of the cemetery of S. Calixtus they made him kneel; the deacon Laurence stood close to

his side; the rest fell a little back. There was the flash of a sword; a dull, heavy stroke; and Sixtus entered into the joy of his LORD.

"Thank the emperor's clemency and mine," cried Blasius, "for being satisfied with the ring-leader. Be well assured that next time none shall be spared." And the ladder used for descent into the pit having been found by Caius, the centurion and the others mounted it, and gave the word to march.

They bore the precious remains of the martyr into the catacombs. Less than half an hour saw him celebrating the unbloody sacrifice, and himself a bleeding victim; setting forth the LORD's death, and following it; standing before the altar as a priest, and lying at its feet as an offering. Quick and happy passage from the darkness of the catacombs to the glory of God's right hand!

But my story must pass over a few hours.

On the afternoon of that same day, the Prefect of Rome was sitting in state in his hall of justice; officers of all ranks stood around him; a shorthand writer was present to take down the public acts; and a small body of soldiers in the lower part of the hall, showed that resistance to any decree of the prefect would be vain.

"May it please your Splendour, they are here," *said an attendant.*

"Bid them come in," replied the prefect. And, in obedience to his directions, the centurion Pedius Blasius, the optio, and the deacon Laurence entered.

"This is the man, centurion?" inquired Fulvius Glabro, the prefect.

"It is, my lord."

"You are a Christian, are you not?" asked Glabro.

"By the grace of God, I am," replied S. Laurence.

"And they tell me that you are a deacon?"

"They tell your Splendour the truth."

"You have, then, I hear, the charge of all the treasures of the places where you worship. Now you have been told, I doubt not, that the most pious and pacific emperor has dealt cruelly with those who follow your abominable superstition: you shall judge for yourself. Those treasures, the lamps, and cups, and plates, can be of no use to your God; He does not want to coin money; and, by all accounts, when He was here on earth, He was poor enough. But the Emperor Valerian will teach you a use for them. These Persian wars press heavily on the treasury; and he calls on you to surrender what does not profit you, and cannot advantage your God, but will be of great use to the republic. Give up your treasures,

then, and not a hair of your head shall be touched."

"It is true," replied Laurence; "the Roman Church has treasures of value, that cannot be told: those of the Cæsars are nothing to them. It is true, also, that I have the charge of them."

Watch those two men standing at the lower end of the hall; they are Christians; they are evidently frightened.

"The deacon will not be a *traditor*" (a surrenderer of the sacred books and vessels), whispers one to the other.

"I hope not; I trust in God not."

"Why does he exaggerate thus? All the gold and silver of the Church will be as nothing to the emperor."

"I can't understand; let us listen again."

"You say well," cried the prefect; his eyes sparkling at the thought of such a spoil. "And you will give them up?"

"Most willingly," said Laurence.

"Miserable apostate!" whispered one of the two men.

"Nay, nay," replied the other, whose name was Serenus, "there is somewhat, Publius, we do not understand in all this. Look how calm and bright his eye is. Apostate never looked so."

"The Cæsar will recompense you," cried Glabro,

joyfully, "and you may also reckon on my favour. When will you give them up?"

"They are in various parts of the city," replied the deacon; "and it will take some little time to get them together. This is the eighth of the Ides of August. I must have three whole days. Will your Splendour give me till the fourth of the Ides?"

"Willingly," returned the prefect; "but you shall swear to me, by your God, that you will present yourself here by the fourth hour on that day."

S. Laurence looked up to heaven, and said, "By our LORD JESUS CHRIST, I swear it."

"It is well," said Glabro; "we know that you Christians never break an oath. Centurion, the prisoner is dismissed."

"Laurence, Laurence, what have you been doing?" cried Publius, as the deacon left the hall of judgment. "How can you dare to disgrace the ministry, and the memory of the blessed Sixtus?"

"I might say," replied Laurence, "even as holy David,—'What have I now done? Is there not a cause?'"

"Tell me," said Serenus, anxiously, "what this means?"

"Rest well assured," said the deacon, "that, by the grace of God, I will never be a traditor. Out

treasures are not his. Only be at the hall at the appointed *time*, and then my words will be made good. And now farewell, for this business asks *for some* dispatch."

"Whatever he means," said Serenus, as they watched him going, "he will not shame the Church. This I am sure of, the prophecy of our holy bishop will be made good."

"Why, it *is* strange that both Laurence and he should have fixed the third day. God knows; to Him let us leave it."

Let us now follow Laurence: he is passing the plebeian cemetery, and keeping straight forward, as if to go to the Colosseum. Ah! I thought so. He is striking off to the right, by that little lane which leads into the very heart of the most miserable, most wicked Suburra. That is the quarter of the city where the archdeacon of the Roman Church will most often be found; for there are the sick, the maimed, the halt, the blind; there are the poor of CHRIST, who are fed by His Church. How close and foul are the lanes! Drunken men, infamous women, children quarrelling; gutters flowing with filth; houses a hundred feet high; lanes so narrow that three people cannot go up abreast; courts where the sun never shines, from the beginning to the end of the year,—that *is the Suburra*. See how Laurence threads his way

up this street, down that alley, across that court. Now he is going into yonder house: he hastens up one flight of stairs after another; each landing-place the abode of three or four miserable families,—more miserable the higher we go. On several of the doors a Mercury is painted, or rather scratched; the filthy walls are defiled with abominable inscriptions,—it is well you cannot read them; and there, by that door, some one has drawn with red chalk, what must be intended for a martyrdom,—a lion springing upon a man,—over whom *Christianus* is written. What! more stairs? Yes: but at last we have reached the top of the house, and S. Laurence knocks at the old battered door.

“Well, Milphidippa, and how fares it with you to-day?”

The poor old woman has been a slave. She was freed at her master's death, when she was almost past work; and soon afterwards she happened, out of curiosity, to hear the Pope S. Cornelius preach. God touched her heart, and she believed.

“As ever,” she said, in a Greek accent; “my body is full of pain, but I have a good hope before me, and that keeps me up.”

“You have seen no one to-day?”

“No one, sir.”

“Then you have not heard the tidings. Our

father, Sixtus, has obtained the crown of martyrdom."

"So soon!" said the old woman. "I was sure that God would call him to it; but so very soon! He is happier. But he cannot have been a bishop a year."

"Eleven months and six days only," said S. Laurence.

"But let me hear how, that I may praise God for him," said Milphidippa.

The archdeacon told her, and then continued: "Now, Milphidippa, there are four *aurei* for you, and they must last you for some time; God knows how long any of us may be here in this persecution! But I have something to ask of you: I wish you to be before the Prefect of Rome's hall, at the fourth hour on the fourth of the Ides. Will you be sure not to fail me? and will you be content not to ask me a reason now?"

"God fail me if I fail you of my own will!" said Milphidippa. "I owe you everything, both in this world, and in that which is to come."

"God be with you, then," said S. Laurence. "I have much business on hand, and may not stay with you; but I shall surely expect you."

Night is gathering in over the city. Still from house to house, from alley to alley, from lane to lane, the unwearied deacon holds on. Now it is

to the old soldier, a cripple ever since the eastern wars of Philip ; now to the widow, with her four little children, who tries hard to support herself by selling *crustula* to schoolboys ; now to the girl who works all day in the large shoemaker's shop, in the Via Sacra, and at evening goes back to her miserable rooms in the very furthest end of the Suburra. There, that is his last visit for to-night, for the house is close to the Porta Querquetularia, and he must turn back.

The moon is up now : how gloriously the Colosseum stands out against the dark sky ! House after house, as S. Laurence passes under the Palatine Mount, sends out a blaze of light. Every now and then the sweet sounds of music pour forth on the night air. But it is not for scenes like these that S. Laurence is preparing himself ; he has the baptism of fire to be baptized with, and how is he straitened till it be accomplished ! S. Sixtus is before the throne of God, and has promised that his faithful deacon shall follow. Yes, servant of CHRIST, the labour is nearly over ; the warfare is almost accomplished ; the red sea of Martyrdom is full in view. - He That slept in death three days shall prepare you for the third day now.

Morning again on the great city. S. Laurence is going through the Regio Esquilina till noon,

and on the same errand as yesterday. Then he bends his way to the Forum Romanum, and enters a large house: it is a bank. Aufidius, the banker, —the man who could write down his name to H.S. M.C. (eight hundred and eighty-eight thousand pounds), is a Catechumen.

"Is your lord within?" asked the deacon of the old woman who sat chained to the door as a gater.

"Yes," she said; and so Laurence passed in through the large hall, with its marble pillars, and entered at another door, by the side of which was written, in large letters, CAVE CANEM,—"Take care of the dog." This door opened into much such an office as we might see in a modern bank. Here there were twelve or fourteen clerks making entries in books,—books not like ours,—but rolls of parchment, kept open and in their place by leaden weights.

"Is Marcus Aufidius at home?" inquired Laurence again, of an old clerk whom he knew,—a Christian.

"He is, sir; walk in." And pushing back a spring door, for they were in use at that time, the deacon entered the banker's private room.

"Aufidius," he said, after the first words were spoken, "I have come to ask how much money *the Roman Church* has in your hands."

"I will tell you in a moment," replied the banker. "Those accounts I always keep here." He drew out a key, very heavy and clumsy, as compared with ours, and opened an iron chest. Taking out a roll, and laying it down on the table, he opened it, talking as he did so.

"And so the holy bishop is gone," he said.

"Yes," replied Laurence. "Few have struggled harder for the crown in life, or obtained it more easily in death."

"I had intended to apply to him to shorten the time of my catechumenate," said the banker; "for these times make me very anxious: what should I now do?"

"There will hardly be an election yet," said Laurence. "The priests will govern the Church, and to them you had better apply. Your request seems to me very reasonable."

"I will do so," said Aufidius. "Here is the account; let me cast it up. You have drawn so largely on me, that you have only ninety-six sesteria in my books (about £800); but I need not say that if more is wanted, more shall be forthcoming."

"Thank you," said Laurence; "but inquiry will be made for it,"—Aufidius turned rather pale,—"and I wish to take it out of your hands. I will give you a *prescriptio* (a cheque) for it now,

and do you send it up, to-night, to the bishop's house; it will be safe there."

"I will do so," said the banker, "and I think you are acting wisely." And, after a few more words, they parted.

That day, and the next, and the next, were spent by S. Laurence as the one before had been; and when, on the evening of the fifth of the Ides, he returned to the bishop's house, where he lived, he blessed God that his work was over, all but the last struggle.

The prefect was in his place on the judgment-seat, a little before the fourth hour on the appointed day, for in his heart he already revelled in the wealth of the Church. The hall was very full, from the vast number of Christians that were there; they had heard of the bold deed of Laurence, and stood by to see the end. The deacon entered alone, for he had earnestly entreated that his friends would not notice him, lest they should be involved in his sentence. But he knew that they were there; he knew that they were praying for him; he knew that the wise old priests of the Roman Church were watching every action and word of his; he knew that the martyrs of other times, the saints of God of that city, from S. Linus to S. Sixtus II., were looking down on him, and he nerved himself *accordingly* for the contest.

It was a very hot morning, that tenth of August. The prefect had wiped his forehead several times, and was beginning to fear lest, after all, the deacon might have escaped; when, as I said, Laurence came in by himself.

"You are welcome," said Fulvius Glabro. "Have you fulfilled your promise?"

"I have," said Laurence.

"Where are the treasures?"

"Without the hall, my lord; I could not bring them in; but your Splendour may see them there."

"Are they so numerous, then?" inquired Flavio.

"They are indeed," answered Laurence.

"I will come, then." The prefect left his seat; and, followed by some of his officers, and the deacon, went to the farther door: it opened, and he saw that the *Via Panis et Pernæ* was blocked up by a multitude of impotent folk: maimed and halt; men with incurable diseases; cripples, deformed, decrepit, orphans, widows; the blind, the scarred, the palsied, the bowed down: there was almost every visitation of God on man, that heart could imagine, to be seen among the crowd.

"What is all this rabble?" cried the prefect.

"These," said S. Laurence, "are the treasures of the Roman Church: we feed them, and they

pray for us. I promised to show them to you, and I have kept my word."

"Infamous wretch!" roared the prefect, half mad with fury and disappointment, "do you dare so to juggle with me? Seize him, Acilius!"

The optio fulfilled the command. "Bind him fast! Drag him into the hall! Pedius Blasius, disperse the mob!" And Fulvius Glabro went back to the seat of judgment.

"Once more," he said, "I ask you, Laurence, whether you will surrender the wealth of your Church to the emperor?"

"Never!" replied the deacon.

"Very well," said Glabro; "I know that you Christians profess to despise death; let us see if you will despise this. Go, some one, for a blacksmith!"

There is a concourse of thousands to the Viminal Hill. The report in the city is, that the first deacon of the Roman Christians is to be broiled alive. A place is staked out on a waste piece of ground. They have lighted a large fire in the middle: it is kindled with *acapna*, that is, logs smeared with oil, to prevent smoke; and now they are piling it with charcoal, to make a red heat without blaze. Over it they have hung a kind of iron cradle,—a huge gridiron,—so as to be in

sight of the multitudes that are crowding around, from the temple of Venus Erycina to that of Minerva Medica.

Shall we draw near and look too?

Yes, there is nothing to fear. S. Laurence is fixed on that place of torture—rather, in his case, a triumphal chariot—to carry him to glory. For God has rebuked the flames: they have no power to hurt his servant. They are come as a disease without pain, gradually loosening the band between soul and body, and setting the martyr free.

And the Christians say that there is a sweet smell, as of incense, over the hill; and that a circle of glory surrounds the head of the departing deacon. All do not see this glory with equal clearness. The Pagans do not behold it at all.

The time of his release is nearly at hand. In a clear, low voice, S. Laurence prays that Rome may become the city of our God and of His CHRIST, and his lips cease to move.

He has followed S. Sixtus in his passion; and now has with him sat down at the Supper of the LAMB.

THE STORY OF
SS. CYRIACUS AND JULITTA.

A.D. 304.

It was a wild July night. The wind, sweeping over mountain and valley, rustled and moaned through the narrow pass called the Gates of Cilicia, over which ran the high road from Tarsus to Tyana, and the north. Now an old oak would rustle and roar far down the mountain side; anon the clump of firs, that served as a kind of beacon to travellers, close to the summit, bent to the blast. Then for a moment all was still, and you might hear the hoarse murmurs of the Cydnus far, far below. Another minute, and up the ravine's side came the gale, like a race-horse, whistling through the dried grass, shrieking round the rock that the peasants called *Pan's Syrinx*, and rioting through the twin lime-trees, that stood forth sentinels of the pass. The moon, now at the full, was sometimes swept over by the light rack, drifting up from the Mediterranean, and then poured out a flood of brightness on crag and peak, deluging

the ravines of Taurus with soft light, and even showing the dark mass of Tarsus in the far horizon. It was, indeed, as one of our great poets said, a glorious night. The LORD was abroad.

Up the steep road on the southern side of the range, and therefore leading from Tarsus, a girl was ascending slowly, and, as it seemed, very cautiously. The rough dark *cyclas* (a sleeved petticoat) she wore, and the coarse *tribon* over that, marked her out, in that part of Asia, as a slave. But if Thessala were the servant of an earthly mistress, she was at least the LORD's freewoman. It was now two years since she had received Baptism and the Seal of the LORD from Eulalius of Iconium; and in the terrible persecution then raging, she had stood firm in the faith.

"I cannot have missed them," she said; "my lady said so positively that she would not come down into the valley till I should bring her word how things stood. God be praised for my tidings!" Still she continued ascending; and as the wind beat more furiously upon her, the road becoming more and more exposed, she again said to herself, while she drew her *tribon* more closely round her, "Blessed Paul must have trod this self-same road when he went to Derbe; and he, too, was in peril of robbers, and in cold and weariness."

She had proceeded about half a mile, and had

nearly reached the top of the mountain, when she started at a voice—

“Is that you, Thessala?”

“God be praised, Charina!” said the poor girl, almost worn out with fatigue and fear. “Is all safe?”

“All safe,” replied her fellow-slave. “Our lady is hard by. Come after me.”

She hurried from the high road, and winding along a path which ran between high rocks, led the way briskly forward. In three or four minutes they came out on a little plot of green sward. A bright fire, fed with the branches of cork and ilex, crackled gaily at the side, under the cover of a high rock, and threw dancing shadows on the stern gray crags, and the summer green of the mountain fir. The amber-coloured light brought out every point and knot of rock into high relief, and threw each rift and cranny into deeper shade. By the side of the fire were some light articles of baggage; and near them sat a lady, holding a sleeping child on her lap.

“Welcome, welcome, Thessala!” cried Julitta, for that was the name of her mistress. “I began to fear that some accident had befallen you. Sit down, sit down; and Charina, give her somewhat to eat and to drink before she tells us what she has done. You look right weary, Thessala; and so well you may.”

Julitta—though the little Cyriacus whom she held in her arms was nearly four years old—was herself not twenty. Her husband was an officer in the eighteenth legion, and had been for many months in Germany. In the mean time, the great Tenth Persecution had broken out. Julitta left her home in Lycaonia, with all her possessions, in the care of a heathen lawyer in whom she could trust, and went to Seleucia, where she heard that the Church had peace. For naturally she feared pain and death more than most; and she was afraid lest, if she fell into the hands of her persecutors, she might, through weakness, fall from the faith, and deny the Lord That had bought her. But when she came to Seleucia, the persecution, under the prefect Alexander, was raging furiously, and she determined to go to Tarsus. To Tarsus, then, with her two servants, she set forth, using no better way of travelling than on mules. They reached the top of Taurus in the afternoon; and then Julitta sent Thessala down the mountain, to the village of Mopsuerene, to learn whether the persecution had also begun in Tarsus.

“I have good news, lady,” she said, when she had taken a little wine. “Every thing is quiet in Tarsus, though they say that there are more Christians than heathens in the place. At the little farm where I stopped to rest,—near the village yonder,

—they were Christians; and the old man gave me bread and goat-cheese, and a cup of Pamphylian wine, for the love of CHRIST.”

“God be praised !” said Julitta ; “ we will go forward to-morrow. Thessala, hold the child, and take care that you wake him not. Charina and I will make up the best bed that we may.”

And so, after committing themselves to His care That neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, the three Christians lay down to rest ; and, no doubt, could their eyes have been opened, like those of the young man of old, they would, like him, have seen that all the mountain was full of chariots of fire and horses of fire, sent to be their guard. Two of them never slept more ; and their last night’s rest was also perhaps their calmest.

The tempest had passed when they woke. The sun looked down out of a cloudless sky ; the air was fresh and dewy ; the birds sang gaily from tree and bush ; the lizard darted along the path ; and Julitta woke the little Cyriacus, and asked him how he had slept ?

“ Oh, mama, so well ! And what a bright morning it is ! How good it is of God to make us such a beautiful world to live in, mama ! ”

“ It is, indeed, my little pet ; and how much more good of Him to make us so much brighter a world that we hope to live in by-and-bye ! Now,

shall we ask Him to take care of us to-day, as He did last night?"

So they knelt down on the grass; and, undisturbed by any sound except the cooing of a wild dove, and the pleasant murmurs of the Cydnus, Julitta said the Lord's Prayer and the morning hymn of the early Church; "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men! Day by day will we magnify Thee, and we worship Thy name, ever world without end. Vouchsafe, O LORD, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art Thou, God of our fathers, and magnified and exalted above all for ever! Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us!"

When they rose, Thessala and Charina busied themselves in setting out such breakfast as they might; and just as they were beginning their meal, a goatherd chanced to drive his flock to the higher pastures, and of him they bought a *chous* of fresh milk.

And, in half an hour, they were on their way to the valley. Even then, it was scarcely six o'clock; and shepherds and husbandmen were going forth to their task. But they proceeded without any stoppage till they came to the little town of Mop-suerene.

"Look, lady!" cried Thessala, as they came up

to a gray old farm,—not so much unlike those which one sees in the mountainous counties of Wales, except that the openings for windows had no glass,—“look, lady! yonder is the old man who showed me such kindness last night.”

He, too, saw Thessala, and came forth into the road. “God speed you, lady,” he said, “and this dear child! You will be in safety at Tarsus now.”

“I have to thank you, good father,” said Julitta, “for your kindness yesterevening to my maiden.”

“I would have done as much for any,” replied the old man; “but what would have become of me if I had turned away from a Christian?”

“And all is quiet at Tarsus?”

“Now it is,” he answered. “But the persecution has been very sharp. I had a son, lady, among the martyrs.”

“Had you, indeed?” inquired Julitta. “God has honoured you much.”

“Would you like to pray at his tomb?” asked the farmer,—a question most perfectly natural at that age.

“Surely,” replied Julitta, “if it be not very far off.”

“It is in my garden,” said the old man. “Leonidas, come and hold the mules!”

The travellers followed their guide, and came out into a pretty little garden, nestling at the foot

of a gentle hill, and shadowed by five or six lime-trees. Under one of these was a grave, with a stone at the head. It was rudely marked with the cross, the palm, a woolcomb, and a pair of pincers; the two latter having been instruments of torture in the passion of the martyr. The inscription—badly written and badly spelt—was: “IN CHRIST. Nicetas, a sweet soul: aged xxiv years, viii months, iv days.” They all knelt; and, for some few moments, at that resting-place of a saint and a martyr, they made their prayer to Him Who is the Martyr of Martyrs, and the Saint of Saints. Then they bade the old man good-bye, and went on towards Tarsus.

Cyriacus rode on the mule before his mother. “Do you think, mama,” he said, “that we shall ever be martyrs?”

“GOD only knows, my child, to what He will call us. But, my pet, if I should be taken away from you first, you are old enough to ask our LORD to make you able to suffer anything, rather than worship gods of wood and stone.”

“I know He will, if I ask of Him,” said Cyriacus; “for you have told me that He loves little children.”

“And little children were His first martyrs, you know; and many children, even now, have suffered for Him. It was but last year that

one glorified him at Rome: her name was Agnes."

"Was she older than I am?" said Cyriacus.

"Yes, she was twelve years old; and she gained a most glorious victory, and is now before the Throne of God, serving Him day and night in His temple; and He has wiped away all tears from her eyes."

"And some day He will wipe away all tears from ours, mama, will He not?"

"I trust, indeed, He will, Cyriacus." And so talking, they passed on.

Three or four hours' ride along the banks of the Cydnus, sometimes chafing along its rocky bed, sometimes flowing, like a mirror, between sweet pastures, and they began to enter the suburbs of Tarsus.

"Now," said Julitta to Cyriacus, "we shall soon see the house where blessed Paul was born, and the place where he preached. But, first, we must find out the bishop, and learn from him what we must do." For they had taken care to be told, before they left home, whereabouts the bishop's house was, or it might not have been an easy thing for a stranger to discover it in time of persecution. And now they passed through the gate of the city, and had as many idle looks directed

towards them, as strangers are sure to have on first entering a town.

"Here seems an inn," said Julitta, as they came to a house which stood a little out into the road, and had the chequers marked on the door-post. "Cyriacus, you shall stay here with Charina; and you, Thessala, shall go with me to the bishop. I think we can find our way from the direction we have."

They accordingly drew up their mules at the inn door, and out came the landlord. He might have been surprised to see a lady so travelling, and so attended; but he answered very civilly the questions of Julitta; told her that there was room enough for her and her servants; and directed her to the street she asked for, that of Aphrodite. Bidding good-bye to Cyriacus, his mother, veiling herself closely, went forth.

"Thessala," said she, when they had entered the street of Aphrodite, "it was the third alley to the right, was it not?"

"Even so, lady; and this ought to be it."

"And there is the black door. Let us knock." She took the hammer, that hung chained to the door-post, and did so. Presently a knock was heard inside the door, and Thessala said—"They are coming." I must stop a moment to tell you that, among the Greeks, the street-door always

opened outwards; therefore, before it was opened, it was usual to knock in the inside, as a warning to passengers to get out of the way.

"Is Cæsarius at home?" inquired Julitta, as a boy opened the door.

"I think that he is, lady," was the answer, given somewhat suspiciously.

"Take that letter in to him, then, and let me wait."

The letter was of the sort called *pacificæ*, or in the Eastern Church, *sustatikai*. They were a kind of recommendation, given by the bishop of the diocese to a priest, when about to travel, or sometimes, in extreme cases as this, to a layman. That which Julitta now gave in, ran thus:

"To all Catholic bishops and priests, Eulalius, by the mercy of God, bishop of Iconium, greeting. Our humility does you to-wit, that the bearer hereof, Julitta, a lady of this city, being in our communion, and that of the Catholic Church, hath left her home on account of the persecution now raging in these parts, whom we commend very heartily to your care and good offices; and so we bid you in the LORD farewell."

Cæsarius came out instantly. "Welcome, my daughter, welcome!" he said; "and how is our brother Eulalius?"

"Well, holy father," replied Julitta, "but much pressed down by the persecution."

"Come in, and this maiden also," said the good bishop. "But do I rightly understand that you came to Tarsus to avoid the persecution?"

"Yes, my father; and they told us that the Church was at peace here."

"And so it was; but have you not heard that the prefect Alexander arrived here late last night?"

Julitta turned very pale. "We left Seleucia to avoid him, and we have been only running into his jaws."

"Take courage, my daughter; neither he nor his master can hurt you, unless He That has all power suffers him."

"I fear less for myself, father, than for my child; for I have one not four years old, whom I left but now at the inn. What if they should lay hands on him?"

"Is it not written," asked the bishop, "'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength'? But if it should be otherwise, consider, my daughter, what S. Stephen beheld in his agony. He saw *JESUS standing* at the right hand of God. Many a time do we read of our *LORD* that He sitteth on the right hand of power; never elsewhere that He standeth. And why stood He then, think you? Why, but to show

how much He feels for the sorrows of His servants? While Stephen was stoned, His LORD would not sit at ease. And again, He stood, as we stand when about to help. Who, therefore, of us, dares to tremble at the thought of passion, if our LORD shall then stand at the right hand of the FATHER to be our succour?"

Thus, for a few moments, Cæsarius spoke; and Julitta's faith revived.

"Nevertheless, my daughter," pursued the bishop, "I would say unto you what our LORD Himself said to His disciples, 'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another.' In this province of Cilicia, there will be no safety while Alexander rules; but Antioch, I believe, is in peace."

"Thither, then, I will go, my father," replied Julitta; "and God reward you for all your kindness."

"But I would advise you to lose no time," said Cæsarius. "Alexander is not one to allow Christians to escape. I must remain here; but to strangers I would advise departure. The Church praises not such, as by headstrong rashness in duty, unnecessarily tempt God."

After a little more conversation of the same kind, Julitta rose to go. "Gladly would I go with you, my daughter," said the bishop, "but I

am known and marked, and might perhaps bring trouble upon you; but God will be a surer guard to you."

They went forth, Julitta and Thessala, and presently arrived at the inn which they had left so shortly before; but, to their great surprise, five or six soldiers were waiting at the door, and one of them, stepping up, said—

"Your name is Julitta, and you dwell at Iconium?"

"It is," she replied, trembling as she spoke.

"Then you must come before the prefect. Take your child with you, if you will: he waits for you here." And one of his comrades brought out Charina and the little Cyriacus.

"Let me go, pray let me go too!" cried Thessala.

"No," replied her mistress; "you could not advantage me, and might bring trouble upon yourself. Stay here, both of you. It may be that I shall return before long."

"What is it, mama?" asked Cyriacus. "Where are they going to take us?"

"Come here, my little one," said his mother. "Show us the way to the prefect's house, sir," she continued, to the officer, "and we follow."

The soldiers surrounded their two prisoners, and the whole party moved on. "Now, Cyriacus,"

said Julitta, in a low voice, "we must do what we have so often talked about—we must confess that JESUS CHRIST is our LORD and GOD, and that we know no other. Will you ask Him to make you able to do this, whatever they may say or do to me or to you?"

"I will," said Cyriacus; "but what will they do to us?"

"That He knows—I cannot tell you. But think, whatever it is, it cannot be for long. They cannot hinder us from going to live with Him when it is over. But we can hinder ourselves. If we deny Him before men, Cyriacus, when will He deny us?"

"At the Last Day," replied the child.

"Yes, and we should never live with Him,—never see that happy place where He is,—but should dwell with evil spirits and wicked men for ever."

"Silence!" cried the centurion; "or your son shall be removed from you."

Julitta obeyed; and only clasping the little hand of Cyriacus more tightly, they soon stood at the entrance of the town-hall. It was a large, low building, with a good-sized portico in front. This portico was full of soldiers, the prefect's guard, who hindered improper persons from entering the hall itself, but allowed the more respect-

able citizens to go in at their will. With a word or two to some of the soldiers, the centurion and his little party entered.

Alexander and some of the rich men of the city were seated on a platform at the upper end of the room. Before them was an altar, with a small fire lighted in it, and by the side of that stood a priest of Jupiter.

"Is that Julitta?" inquired the prefect.

"Yes, my lord," replied the centurion.

"What is that child?"

"Her son, my lord."

"Bring him here." Cyriacus clung to his mother. "I won't go — you shall not take me."

"Foolish child!" cried Alexander; "no one wants to hurt you. Bring him here, I say." And Cyriacus was torn away from his mother, and carried to the platform. Alexander took him on his lap, patted his head, and said, "Let the prisoner be brought forward."

Even in that age, Alexander had the character of being a rough, brutal man; and he began as might have been therefore expected.

"Now, Julitta, it is only a waste of time to ask whether you are a Christian; we have heard too much of you for that."

"I am a Christian, my lord."

"Very well; then there is but one way with you. Publius, do as you were ordered."

Cyriacus remained perfectly quiet at first, not understanding what the order meant; but when he saw the executioners tearing off the palla of his mother, and the terrible *plumbatæ*, scourges with leaden weights, in their hands, he struggled against the strong arm of the judge, and cried out—"What are you going to do? I am a Christian, too. Leave go of me. I am a Christian, and I will be one."

"Say that again, if you dare," cried Alexander, furiously.

"I *am* a Christian," replied the child, at once.

The prefect, seizing him with both his hands, dashed him furiously against the ground. He did it only in a fit of wild rage; but God, Who sometimes gives the crown without the struggle, directed his fury. The head of Cyriacus struck the edge of the stone step, and was shattered in pieces. Scarcely a second passed from the time that the Christian child was in the arms of a persecutor, and the embrace of angels.

The spectators stood aghast. One or two ran to raise up the lifeless body. Even Alexander was shocked, and muttered somewhat in excuse of his deed. But Julitta only said, "I yield Thee

thanks, O LORD, that Thou hast given my son the crown before me."

What need to dwell on the tortures that she, out of weakness being made strong, valiantly endured?—on the scourges, and rack, and boiling pitch, by which she was tried? She—long since—has forgotten them; and following our LORD in His passion, has sat down with Him at His marriage-supper. There, too, she met Cyriacus,—no longer a feeble child, but one of the hundred and forty and four thousand that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

No long time ago, I came, about the close of a summer's evening, to a lonely churchyard in one of our sweetest English counties. The sun glittered in the great western window; the birds sang joyfully from their green chapels, the chesnut-trees that girded in the holy ground. A soft, quiet light fell in among the graves; a pleasant scent breathed from the tedded hay in the home field hard by; the peasant went whistling home along the narrow lane; and the weary cart-horses stooped down to drink at the village pond.

"What is the name of this church?" I asked of the venerable old clerk, as, keys in hand, he came to open the door.

"S. Cyriac and S. Julitta," he said; "they

tell me that they were martyrs in the old times."

And so I told him, as I have told you, their story.

THE
CONVERSION OF S. GENES.

A.D. 304.

"AND what comedy for to-day, noble Acilius?" inquired a young Roman patrician of his friend, as they sauntered along the *Alta Semita* to the theatre of Balbus.

"By Hercules, good Festus," replied Manius Acilius, "I neither know nor care. The people are weary of these rejoicings, and so am I too. What is Maximian to us, that we should care whether he has reigned twenty years or twenty months?"

"*Medius fidius!*" cried Festus, "you are somewhat bold of your words! Blood has been let for less than that, before now."

"Well, well, it matters much less what one says than to whom. But I hear that Diocletian is as weary of the shows as any one, and means to leave the city in a day or two."

"We shall have a dull winter," said Acilius. "By the twelve gods!" he continued, as they turned under the Quirinal Hill, "here is the empe-

ror himself. Look, here comes the slave with the fire and incense before him ! ”

“ You must kneel,” cried Festus hastily ; “ the emperor is all the more particular about it, because so much objection was made to the introduction of the custom.”

The two friends stood still, till the magnificent litter of Diocletian approached. Then they knelt hastily, and indeed as if they were ashamed of themselves ; for the feeling against the practice was very strong, and it was thought unbecoming a Roman citizen to bow the knee to mortal man.

“ Good morrow, Festus,” said the emperor,—a large, unwieldy man, somewhat bloated with indulgence, and more by disease, but with a firm, decided countenance, and an eagle eye. “ Are you for the theatre ? ”

“ We are, an please your splendour,” replied Festus. “ In my time, certainly, the shows have never been so costly or magnificent.”

“ I know not what they have for this morning,” said Diocletian. “ I ordered that Genes, the buffoon, should be there ; he is a rare favourite of the people.”

“ And most deservedly so, sire. I know none that can raise a heartier laugh.”

“ He is especially excellent in mimicking the

Christians," remarked Acilius; "I marvel where the rogue got his knowledge of their ways."

"He is excellent in that," said the emperor; "I must ask him, one of these days, whether he was bred among them?"

"He will be even worth more than he is at present," said Festus, knowing that the prophecy would please Diocletian, "when that abominable race is swept away from the face of the earth."

"There will be no need for him to wait long for that time," replied Diocletian. "The master of the mint brought yesterday the cast of a medal he is preparing: on one side, the heads of the Augusti; on the other, the genius of the Roman Empire trampling on a cross—the motto, "Superstitio debellata" (Superstition crushed).

"Truly a noble idea," said Acilius. And, as he spoke, the litter stopped at the portico of the theatre of Balbus. There was a shout from the bystanders, who were not very many, of—"The gods preserve the Augustus!" and taking but little notice of his subjects, the emperor descended from his litter, and went into the theatre. Large placards were posted round the building, to the effect that the *Medea* of Quintus Albinovanus would be there acted at noon precisely; then the *Nervolaria* of Cæcilius Statius, the most excellent comic poet

whom the Latins ever had ; and then, it was briefly added, Genes would amuse the people.

I am not going to dwell on the very dull tragedy, during which the people, in the highest *caveæ*, yawned, gossiped, or ate apples ; or on the comedy, which kept them better amused. No ; and I must not dwell on what followed when Genes came on to the stage. The mob clapped and cheered ; even the senators and knights applauded, as the buffoon, ascending the *pulpitum*, began his entertainment.

It is well for you that you cannot have any idea of the fearful abyss of wickedness into which Rome at that time had fallen. Utterly lost was all sense of virtue ; things at which savages would have blushed, were encouraged and applauded ; no words can express the abominable foulness of the crimes which there passed as an everyday matter ; and in all this wickedness Genes—he was paid for it—took the lead ; his jests, his dialogues with the spectators, his wit, were vile beyond the power of a Christian to think. Thus much I must say of them, to show you that if any man ever stood far, to all human appearance, from the kingdom of heaven, Genes was that man. But the things that are impossible with men, are possible with God.

“ By the twelve gods ! ” said the buffoon, “ I feel

very ill. I knew Albinovanus would be the death of me, some of these fine days."

"Albinovanus!" cried one of the other jesters.

"Aye," said Genes; "I came hot into the theatre, and his tragedy has thrown the cold upon my heart."

There was a loud burst of laughter. When it was over, Genes said—

"By Hercules! I have it. I'll turn Christian. They say whoever does that misses Cerberus, and Pluto, and Charon, and the rest of our friends that the poets talk of, and I have no fancy to see them."

"Excellently well said!" cried another, for the whole thing had been got up before. "Shall we send for a priest?"

"Aye, Davus, and pretty quickly too. Jovius, up there, won't see him." And with all the license that his employment allowed, he winked at the emperor.

What followed, showed the deep wisdom of the early Church in suffering everything—in sitting down quietly under the worst suspicions—rather than allow the Holy Eucharist to be made known to the heathen. It was most awful that Baptism should be profaned; but how much more fearful had the Mystery of our LORD'S Body and Blood been made a laughing-stock in the Roman theatre!

It was to prevent this that, many years before, S. Tharsitius, a sub-deacon, had laid down his life, and is reckoned among the martyrs.

In a few moments, two men came on the stage, vested, the one to represent a priest, the other an exorcist. Others brought in a tub of water, and set it down. The exorcist went through the form of casting out the evil spirit ; the priest baptized Genes ; and then there was a pause, for the people were in expectation of some fresh wit from the buffoon. The other actors looked at him ; and they saw an expression in his face which, till that moment, had never been there. The low jest, the foul oath, were no longer to be found written on it ; but in their stead came purity, and resolution, and deep, deep calm.

"Admirable!" cried Davus. "But the *caveæ*" (the benches that rose one above the other from the stage to the top of the theatre) "will not see it. Come, boys, we must carry him before the emperor, to be examined."

"Do so," said Genes, in a voice the sternness of which made his companions start.

Diocletian was seated in the centre of the lowest *cavea*, and not more than five feet above the level of the stage ; and over his head hung a canopy of silk, wrought with gold and precious stones. In front of him, then, they set Genes ; and the mob

kept the utmost silence, expecting somewhat worth the hearing.

“Lord Augustus,” said he, in a voice which was heard in every part of the theatre, “wherever, up to this time, I have heard the very name of CHRIST, I have shrunk from it, as from some unclean thing. But, nobles and people of Rome, if ever you have listened to me before, when I sought to beguile you to your ruin, listen to me for one moment now, when I am speaking the very truth. At the time the water touched me, a brightness came round me,—I saw that angels were by me,—I felt that my sins were set before me,—I saw a hand that descended from heaven and swept them away. You, my lord Augustus, have, with this people, ridiculed these holy mysteries,—I have ridiculed them also; but, now, I tell you that JESUS CHRIST is the only LORD, the only Truth, and the only Light, and that from Him alone you can hope for pardon.”

Diocletian had at first listened with a broad smile, which gradually grew fainter and fainter, till at length his face wore a completely puzzled expression. He knew not whether the declaration of Genes were intended in serious earnest, or were a capital piece of acting. But the crowd generally, who only heard the words, and could not see

the resolute manner and determined eye, burst forth into a roar of applause.

"Bravo, Genes! Down with the Christians! Caius to the lions! The Bishop of Rome to the torture! More of it, Genes! Bravo! bravo!"

"Bravo, Genes!" cried the emperor at length. "But by the fortune of the empire, I thought you were in earnest."

"As surely as God, That shall judge us, hears, so surely am I in earnest," said Genes, firmly. "If this be any reason for applause, citizens, applaud. I repent for my past life, and I abhor it; and I call, with all my heart, on Him Whose servant I now am, to forgive it."

"Come, come," said Diocletian angrily, "something too much of this. Give us somewhat else, man; this is a theatre, and not a Christian meeting."

"My lord," persisted Genes, "by all my hopes hereafter, I am in earnest. I deserve to be doubted; but, by God's grace, I am a Christian."

"If it were possible, most miserable wretch"—cried Diocletian—and he paused.

"Sire," said the prefect of the city, Calvus Plautianus, who sat next to the emperor, "I believe that he means what he says."

"Assuredly as our Lord lives, and I hope to live with Him," said Genes.

"Prefect," cried Diocletian, "send for the *equuleus*" (the instrument of torture, so called) "at once. Hold him fast, fellows. Have it on to the stage, good Plautianus. Worthy citizens, you have been disappointed of the wretch's jokes; let us see what music his shrieks will make for you."

And a shout of joy echoed from every part of the theatre; for that was a spectacle which the bloodthirsty mob preferred to every other sight.

Just as an August sun was setting behind the Janiculum, Caius, Bishop of Rome, was returning from comforting and congratulating a family who had a son among the martyrs. He took the least frequented ways, for he remembered our Lord's saying, and would not expose himself needlessly. Just as he turned round by the Porta Conventalis, a deacon of the Roman Church, by name Damasus, hurried up to him.

"I was seeking you, holy father," he said hastily. "Have you heard the tidings?"

"No, my son," said the pope mournfully; "I have heard tidings of nothing but persecution and sorrow."

"All Rome rings of it," cried Damasus; "you know Genes, the buffoon?"

"I know him, miserable man. God pardon him!"

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"God *has* pardoned him, my father. He has obtained the crown of martyrdom."

And Damasus told the tale from the beginning, and went on to relate how S. Genes, having courageously endured the worst of tortures, had half an hour since been beheaded, and had thus entered into the joy of his LORD.

"The last shall be first, indeed," said Caius. "God forgive me my want of faith. He That hath thus manifested His victory in the theatre, must truly be King of kings, and LORD of lords!"

THE TEMPLE OF SERAPIS.

A.D. 389.

I HAVE never yet told you more than one story about Egypt. Not, most certainly, because the Church of Alexandria sent forth fewer martyrs, or raised up Bishops less holy, than her sister Churches of the East. No! there was S. Athanasius the Apostolic, who stood alone against the world, and by the might of the truth that was in him, forced it to bow before his teaching; there was S. Cyril, who strove unweariedly against a deadly heresy touching our LORD, and endured hard speeches, and evil thoughts, and bitter revilings, for many a long year, in defence of the faith; there was S. Alexander, who cast out Arius as an unclean thing from the Church; there was S. Peter, one of the last and greatest of the martyrs; then there were those holy hermits who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, like S. Paul, and S. Antony, and S. Macarius: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

However, it is of none of these that I am now going to tell you. The time of which I am writing was that when Arian persecutions were at an end, and the great Emperor Theodosius had given peace to the Church. Theophilus was now Patriarch of Alexandria. He was a man of great talent, of great influence, and of great learning. He was uncle to S. Cyril, who succeeded him ; but I very much fear that, notwithstanding all the good things that may truly be said of him, his heart was not right towards God.

Now, I will no longer talk to you myself, but will introduce you to my people, and let them tell their own story in their own way.

Alexandria was then one of the most wonderful cities in the world ; not only because of the countless vessels that rode at anchor in its harbour, but because of the enormous granaries, and warehouses, and stores, and markets, and shops of all kinds, that filled every street near the sea, and more especially that part called the Baucalis, where also stood the first Christian Church. The city was given up, to quote what S. John says, to “the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of *most* precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and

marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and,"—I too much fear it,—“bodies and souls of men.”

But now the markets were empty, the quays were deserted,—buyers and sellers were gone,—nay, there was scarcely a boat in the harbour moving from ship to shore, or from shore to ship. From the heart of the city, however, a loud hum of voices arises,—sometimes a shout,—sometimes a shriek,—sometimes a short, decisive word of command. If we go along the street of S. Mark (it used to be called the street of Isis), we shall come out on to the scene of the uproar. Though the Cross has triumphed, you may notice, as we go along, that almost every house has the figure of the Egyptian god, Serapis, painted on it: the old superstition is not quite torn out. Still the shouts wax louder,—there is the call of a trumpet,—a roar of applause,—keep straight and quickly on, and we shall soon discover the reason.

There! the scene is before us! The whole square is full of a sea of citizens and soldiers, rolling here and there, like waves before a mighty wind. He on horseback,—there, on the white horse, I mean,—is Evagrius, Augustal Pre-

fect. The soldiers round him belong to the fourth cohort of the fourteenth legion, surnamed *Alauda*, the Lark, because of their sprightliness, I suppose. That dark enormous mass of buildings, rising terrace behind terrace, and fortified by walls and battlements, is the temple of Serapis. The Pagans, in open rebellion, have seized it, for they have lately been driven to frenzy by the orders that Theophilus has obtained from the emperor to demolish some of their temples. They hold out gallantly against all the emperor's forces, and the immense strength of the place makes the siege a work of difficulty, danger, and time.

"Lord Augustal," cried one of the military tribunes, spurring through the crowd, "the rams are ready, if we can but get them up to the eastern side."

"Let the archers and slingers play on the wall," said Evagrius; "I will try a *tortoise* against it anon. Marcus Varro, take good heed that the *Isis* sails this afternoon, and let the dispatches be so made out that the emperor may see our necessity."

"Truly, my lord," said Varro, "you might as well try to storm the stars as this place without assistance: and the knaves are well provisioned too, I find."

"Why, who would have thought that a philoso-

pher like Olympius would make so good a general, for he is general, I hear?"

"Not a doubt of that," replied Varro; and Helladius, the Priest of Jupiter, is second in command."

"Nevertheless," said the military tribune, "it shall never be said that the *Lark* was driven back by a set of vagabonds like these Pagans."

"We will spare life as much as we may," said the Augustal; "but we will blockade the place, if we do not carry it by assault this time. Ha! here are the rams!" And as he spoke, they rattled heavily along the street of Augustus, and came forth into the square.

"Now then, Minutius," cried Evagrius. "Let the Balearic slingers advance. Sweep that wall as clean as a threshing floor after a high wind."

"I will, my lord," cried the military tribune: and he went off to make his arrangements.

It was a terrible scene that followed. The Achæan archers and the Balearic slingers did their duty manfully. The rams thundered against the eastern wall; the *catapults* hurled great stones into the court of the temple. The besieged defended themselves as best they might: they rolled pieces of rock down on the head of the ram; they flung molten lead and boiling water at the men that worked it; they made trial of a new machine,

which cast clouds of heated sand over the whole square of Serapis, blinding, and confusing, and torturing.

"Bid the trumpets sound a retreat," said Evagrius, at length.

The emperor's troops accordingly fell back. The ghastly space before the temple walls was strewn with dying and dead ; huge masses of rock lay confusedly scattered here and there ; and terror reigned through all that part of the city.

But within the temple it was a very different scene. Olympius called the principal officers together in the hall of Isis. This joined the temple itself, and like it stood in the middle of the court, the outer walls of which, their cloisters, passages, chambers, and lodgings, formed the ramparts which had so lately been attacked. The greater part of the building was of granite : the pillars were thick, and short, and massive, and sloped inward, after the fashion of Egyptian architecture ; and there were many a flight of steps, and many a sphinx, and many of the foul symbols of Serapis on this side and on that.

In the hall of Isis, then, the Pagan officers were assembled. The floor was of granite, the roof of cedar, but the walls were plated with brass ; and men said that under the brass was a covering of silver, and under the silver a covering of gold.

"Well! friends," said Olympius, "we have shown these Christian cowards what it is to drive honest men to despair. We have but just to look over the walls to be convinced that we have not fought in vain."

"That hitherto we have been successful," said Helladius the Priest, "we owe it in the first place indeed to the gods, but next to yourself, noble Olympius. Till they can starve us out (and that will not be for many a week), we may laugh at their best efforts."

"I have a plan to propose," said Hellebicus, the Priest of Isis, "which, with your respectability's permission, will, I think, be found very serviceable."

"Speak boldly," said Olympius. "If you will only advise as you fight, we shall be much beholden to your counsel."

"This, then, it is," replied the other: "The emperor's troops are well nigh worn out, for they hardly out-number us,—and we are fighting behind stone-walls: the citizens, too, exert themselves very little,—and I am sure that we shall have no more attacks to-night. Now I advise that, at the first hour of the night, when the citizens are at supper—and the army too—we sally out at the western gate. Alexandria to a beggar's wallet that we take some prisoners,—

and they may stand us in good stead for hostages."

"Hellebicus speaks well, in my judgment," said the Priest of Jupiter. "Such a sortie will serve more than one good purpose. It will give the citizens a wholesome terror of what we can do: it will serve to distress the soldiers, and hinder them from taking rest,—and, as hath been said, it will give us hostages."

"The counsel is accepted by all," said Olympius. "Let us then sup about the eleventh hour, and see that our men be ready for the sally directly afterwards. Let those lead who are best acquainted with that part of the city, and where the most notable persons are to be found, for it is for them we must chiefly try."

Orders were accordingly issued out through the fortress. There was cleaning of armour, and furnishing of spears; and a little after five o'clock there were the sounds of feasting and revelry; and many a toast was drunk to the re-establishment of the worship of the great gods, and the downfall of the Naziritish superstition. There we must for the present leave the garrison.

I must now take you into a much humbler place; and yet there, perhaps, was as much true happiness as is often to be found in this world. Menophantus, the druggist, lived in the corner

shop where the street of S. Thomas ran into the square of Isis. His store of drugs, which were kept in chests, arranged all round the walls of his shop, would have made a modern physician smile; for, though you might see many medicines which we still use, as sulphur, and hellebore, and belladonna, and some preparation of poppies, yet a great number certainly had more the character of charms than medicines,—and the dried bloods of various animals were some of his greatest treasures. In a little closet opening out of the shop the good druggist kept his library, which was not very large: the books were arranged in the present Coptic fashion, namely, hung to pegs by strings fastened to their clasps. There you might see the works of Hippocrates, and Aretæus, and Celsus, and Xenocrates, and Galen, and some others, that have now long perished. There, too, you might notice the chairs for patients who might wish to be bled, the case of lancets, and so on, very much in the same fashion as at the present day.

For Menophantus was a Christian, and he acted up to the commandment, “not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the LORD.” He had been driven from his home and from the city in the Arian persecution, under the anti-patriarch George. He had returned with S. Athanasius; and, truth to say, he was *rather* fond of telling the

story of the reception of that true Bishop of God. "Ah!" he used to begin, on the occasion of any crowd or procession,—“but you should have been with me when Athanasius returned to the city!” His wife, Glaphyra, was also a true follower of our LORD, in the midst of a city which, even then, had much fallen from its first love. Her grandfather had suffered in the great tenth persecution; and she often spoke of the glory of being thus descended from a martyr. They had two children, Dionysius, who was a sub-deacon of the Church of Alexandria, and Cyrilla, of whom I shall have more to say presently. And now the four were seated round their supper, in a pleasant little room which opened from the shop, and looked out behind into the Baucalis.

“The ship has sailed,” said Dionysius. “I saw it in the offing as I came back from the great church.”

“God send it a fair wind,” cried his father. “They say that, without succours from the emperor, the place will never be taken. I wish—no offence to his zeal—that our good Bishop had gone rather more gently to work in demolishing these temples.”

“How!” exclaimed the sub-deacon, “would you have him for an hour give place to such abominations? And after all, it was not the destruction of the temples so much that aggravated

them, but the preservation of that ludicrous idol-ape, as a memorial to future ages of what their fathers had worshipped."

"Well!" said Menophantus, "God send it for the best! And now that the Pagans *have* been guilty of open rebellion, I, for one, trust that one stone upon another will not be left in any of their temples."

"It is a mercy," said Glaphyra, "that hitherto we have escaped from all harm. About the ninth hour, a stone from one of the catapults all but struck the roof of the house, and fell in the street beyond."

"Several have suffered in property," remarked Dionysius; "but, when the rebellion is put down, his holiness intends to recompense them from the goods of the Church."

"That seems but fair," said his father. "I marked Theophilus himself talking to the Augustal in the very heat of the attack."

"He exposes himself rather too much," replied the sub-deacon; "and so does young Cyril, too."

"Well, Cyrilla!" said Menophantus, "I am neither going to allow you nor your mother to remain in so dangerous a place while this siege lasts. We have been talking the matter over, and your mother agrees with me that, as the river is open, you had better take vessel for Metelis."

Something I know myself of the Bishop there, his blessedness Pœmen; and there you can remain until this tyranny be overpast."

"I had rather have remained with you, dear father, if you are thinking of danger for me," said Cyrilla; "but if you and my mother think otherwise——"

"Hark! what is that noise?" cried Glaphyra. And at the same moment there was a confused burst of screams, shouts, cries of "Arms! arms!" and the sound of trumpets in the great square. Dionysius hurried to the door. Men, women and children were flying in all directions,—houses were hastily barred and bolted up,—men snatched up whatever they held most valuable, and fled. "What is it all?" he inquired of a tradesman who was hurrying by.

"A sally! a sally from the Temple!" he cried, without relaxing his speed for a moment.

"You must fly instantly," shouted Dionysius, rushing back to his family. "There is a sally from the garrison. Out, the back way, and do not lose a moment!"

But it was too late. Menophantus was a man of some wealth and influence, and his shop was marked. Shouts were heard in front of "In here! in here!"

"Take Cyrilla, my father!" said Dionysius,

almost dragging his mother out at the door which opened into the street of S. Thomas. At the same moment the house was full of armed men.

"You are our prisoners," cried Helladius, seizing Menophantus and his daughter. "Here, Dinocrates and Philemon, off with them safely. You shall answer for them."

Through the masses of soldiery pouring over the great square, Cyrilla and her father were hurried along. The old man heard the trumpets sounding at the Augustal's palace,—he even saw the crests of the *hastati* as they swept the street of S. Thomas,—he hoped to the last that help would come. But the Pagan soldiery were too rapid: they hurried their prisoners under the heavy arch on the western side of the Temple, and hastily thrusting them into one of the lodging rooms in the outer arcade, bolted them in, and left them.

So suddenly had all passed, that both father and daughter looked at each other for a few moments without speaking.

"My poor, poor child!" said Menophantus, at length.

"Let us praise God," said Cyrilla, "that at least my mother and brother have escaped,—if you are quite sure of that."

"I am sure they did," replied her father. "No one passed through that door afterwards. But what must I do for you? What can be their aim in wishing for prisoners?"

"Well, father, whatever it is, we are in God's hands, and not in theirs. But after all, it seems impossible that they can mean to make us more than hostages. I grieve more for what my mother will suffer when she learns the truth than for aught else."

"I will ask to see this Olympius," said her father, "as soon as any one comes to us. I knew him well, and have done him more than one good turn before now. But listen!"

It was clear (though the only window that lighted the room was too high up to allow any one to look out from it) that the garrison were either retiring or being driven in. In a few moments there was the tramp of soldiery in the court, and manifestly also a large body of men outside the walls.

Evening darkened into twilight,—twilight into night,—and still Menophantus and Cyrilla looked in vain for any visit from their captors. There we must leave them for the present.

That same night, about the second watch, Helladius and Olympius sat together in a little room which opened off from the Temple of Serapis.

It had served as a kind of vestry ; but now the only furniture was a table and a few chairs. The philosopher and priest sat opposite to each other. A lamp burnt rather dimly on a bracket,—and on the table was an *amphora* of Mareotic wine, and two drinking cups of amethyst.

“Well to thee !” said Olympius, filling himself a cup, and passing the goblet to his friend, who followed his example. “I think, Helladius, it was a good day’s work.”

“Why, yes,” said the priest. “I know I struck down nine persons myself ; and I think very few of them will ever get up again.”

“That is well,” replied Olympius. “But we, of course, do not deceive ourselves for an instant, so as to think that this place can really be held out when a sufficient body of forces is brought to act against it. The only thing for us, is to make the best terms ourselves, if we may.”

“How many prisoners were taken to-day ?” inquired the other.

“Fourteen,” said the philosopher, “but not of note, except you call Menophantus and his daughter so.”

“My advice is,” said Helladius, “that to-morrow we give them this choice, to sacrifice or to die.”

“Good Jupiter !” cried Olympius, “to what end ?”

"To many," said the priest. "In the first place, to revenge ourselves, so far as we may, on this accursed superstition; then, also, we shall keep our soldiers in good humour, which is something. But those are the least considerations. I think if they stand out against all that we can do, we shall also save ourselves."

"How, in Charon's name?"

"Don't you know," replied the other, "that those fools of Christians will never revenge a martyr, lest they should tarnish his glory? Don't you know that they will do or offer anything to preserve the life of him that makes him so? Else, they hold, the man may fall as a just person, but dies not as a martyr."

"You have a quick wit, Helladius. It is so,—very well,—be it as you say, and let us begin to-morrow with Menophantus and that girl."

"We will," said the priest. "But hark ye!—who can that be in the temple?"

"There can be no one," replied Olympius. "There is no entrance but by the great eastern door and this room; and that, I know, has been barred and bolted long ago."

"Did you hear nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Listen now, then." And there echoed through the Temple a sound which both the hearers after-

wards agreed in calling indescribable. It was like the softest, sweetest music ; but yet it was like no music of this world,—so very gentle,—so very spiritual. Even when it was most exquisite, the impression it gave was that of a dream.

“ Let us see what it can be,” said Olympius, turning pale.

“ Shall I take the lamp ?” asked Helladius.
“ Pooh !—what *can* it be ?”

“ Sounds like that I never heard before,” said the philosopher. “ But let us go in.”

Helladius reached down the lamp, opened the door, and was crossing the threshold, when the unseen music swelled out to a burst of harmony, and the words echoed from one end to the other of that unholy place :

ALLELUIA ! FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT
REIGNETH !

Terrified beyond measure, the two friends hastily closed the door, and retired into the room where they had been seated.

“ It is plain witchcraft !” said Helladius, helping himself with a trembling hand to another cup of Mareotic.

“ It is most strange,—most utterly unaccountable !” groaned Olympius.

“ May it by any chance be some of the Christian prisoners ?” asked the priest.

"Hardly possible,—but shall we venture again and see?"

"At all events, everything seems perfectly quiet now."

They entered. Everything was silent. Save the idol, neither form of man or of anything else was to be seen. The doors were secured as usual. And when the story became known, the Church of Alexandria believed that the God Who, before He left His temple at Jerusalem, caused that dreadful voice to be heard in the Holy of Holies, "Let us depart hence!" was now pleased to foretell the approaching fall of the heathen shrines at Alexandria, by the minstrelsy of heavenly choirs.

Morning came. All the garrison that could be spared from the ramparts, was under arms in front of the temple. A fire was kindled on the altar that stood before the image of Serapis: around it stood Helladius, Olympius, and the other chiefs.

"Bring in the prisoners," said Olympius, "the old man first."

Accordingly, in a few moments, Menophantus was introduced, between two of the soldiers, and brought up close to the altar of incense.

"The great gods are just," said Helladius. "You have tyrannized over us long, old man, and you are now in our hands. The gods Vale-

rian, and Decius, and Diocletian, and Julian, are no longer upon earth, but their spirits are with us still, and rejoice that here—here where the worship of the blessed immortals hath ever chiefly flourished—should such a sacrifice be offered to them as will be more grateful than Sabeian incense. You have your choice, sir: sacrifice to Serapis, or prepare to die.”

“I bless God,” said Menophantus, “that He hath given me the opportunity of so glorifying His name; and I pray Him that, as He calls me to the lot of His martyrs in this life, so He will give me a portion with them in that which is to come. But you, Olympius!—you who professed to be my friend!—is this of your doing?”

“I am your friend still,” said Olympius. “Sacrifice, and not a hair of your head shall be hurt. Believe what you like still; all we care for is the show of worship.”

“And that, by God’s grace, you shall never have from me,” said Menophantus firmly; “therefore, do with me as you list.”

“We shall make short work of it,” said Heladius, “if the case be so. Do you persist in your refusal?”

“Most surely I do.”

“Lead him out, Varro,” said the priest. Three or four soldiers obeyed; there was a pause of ex-

pectation ; and then the sound of a dull blow outside the temple.

"That is well," said Helladius ; and almost at the same time, a soldier re-entered, merely saying, "He is dead."

"Throw his body over the walls," cried Hella-dius, who seemed to take the lead, "and then bring in his daughter."

In a few minutes Cyrilla stood before her judges. Her eyes were filled with tears, for they had told her, as she passed the court, of her father's death. But they were not tears of sorrow. That he should be among the martyrs seemed to her so glorious an honour, as perhaps it would have seemed in no other age of the Church. In the age of persecution, the crown of martyrdom was so common, that its individual glory was perhaps less felt ; in the age when the Church had been long at peace, martyrdom seemed an event which, from the fact of its impossibility, could scarcely come within the range of desire. But then, it was but wishing to obtain that of which so many, in the last generation but one, had been counted worthy.

"Maiden," said Helladius, "I ever hold that fewest words are best. There is the fire, and there is the incense : sacrifice to Serapis, or, by Hercules ! we will do our worst."

"I sacrifice myself," replied Cyrilla, "to our LORD JESUS CHRIST,—to Him for Whose sake my dear father but now laid down his life; but to your miserable idols, who are indeed devils, and not gods, I sacrifice nothing."

"But you shall sacrifice," said Hellebicus. "Drag her to the altar, some of you."

"That," said Cyrilla, as she was hastened thither by main force, "ye may well do; but He Whom I serve knows that I go of compulsion."

"Now," said the priest of Isis, "we will see whether you will not change your mind. Stretch her hand over the altar, and hold her elbow, so that she may be compelled to keep it so."

It was done as he ordered; and then taking a burning coal and incense, he put them into the palm of Cyrilla's outstretched hand. "Now, will you not throw the incense into the flame?" he cried.

"If I do," replied the Christian maiden, "it will be of mere bodily weakness. Such a sacrifice is no sacrifice, but a juggle. But, by God's grace, ye shall not even have so poor a triumph as that."

Steadily she held her hand over the altar, and it did not even tremble. The heat of the coal died away, and not a particle of incense had been shaken into the flame.

"Off with her head, too!" cried Helladius, "and call in another prisoner."

We pass over nearly a fortnight.

Helladius was right. The Emperor Theodosius declared that he envied the martyrs who had fallen in the Temple of Serapis; and strictly forbade that any should tarnish their glory by taking revenge on their murderers. A free pardon was offered to the Pagans if they would evacuate the place; and they, rejoicing to obtain terms so much better than they had ventured to hope, willingly surrendered. Not even Helladius was punished. He went to Damascus; and there, supporting himself by teaching grammar, he lived for many years.

Then the work of demolition began. Masons, carpenters, and plumbers, wrought night and day. Huge wagons groaned under the stones and bricks carted from the spot. Terrace was levelled after terrace, and a new quay formed with the materials. Secret passages were discovered,—dark and foul chambers, where scenes of unutterable abomination had been performed. Rooms were laid bare, where newly born infants had been murdered, that augury might be taken from their entrails. And now, at length, one part of the Temple only remained—the huge image of Serapis.

And why did it remain? Because the workmen were afraid to touch it. There was an ancient prophecy that, when it was destroyed, the earth would cleave asunder, the sky fall in, and chaos return. And though the Christians of Alexandria would have been loth to profess their belief in the legend, there was superstition enough left to make them very unwilling to prove its falsehood.

As I said, stone, bricks, and earth, were removed; and no trace of the Temple was left but the idol. There it stood, alone, in its hideousness; it was of wood, richly ornamented with gems, and standing some twelve feet high.

It was a summer evening; and the rays of the sun fell slant on the misshapen image, and the crowds that were assembled to witness its demolition. Word had been brought to the Patriarch Theophilus, that none was willing to run the risk; and with the priests and deacons of his Church he came, declaring that they would cut down the image with their own hands, rather than allow it to pollute the city for another night.

"Is it possible, men of Alexandria?" he said. "Who hath bewitched you, that you should believe so monstrous a lie? What! this city call itself the first school of philosophy in the world, and dread that the destruction of a piece of rotten wood will bring back chaos! Is it so? Must

we do the deed ourselves? Is there none in all this assembly who will show his faith in the God That made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is? Men of Alexandria! ye count them happy that so lately laid down their lives on that very spot, then accursed by devils, now blessed by the passion of martyrs. But what, think you, would they have said, could they have seen that the idol which they died rather than worship, their fellow-citizens would fear to destroy? Is there no one here who will take hatchet in hand, and hew me down that image?"

There was a pause,—and then a soldier, named Besas, stepped forth and said—"I will, if your Holiness will give me your blessing."

"You have it, my son," replied the Patriarch. "And now go forth, in God's name, and cast down the accursed thing."

Besas took an axe which the workmen had been using, and approached the idol. The crowd pressed closer together, and nearer to the image;—every breath was hushed in the intensity of their suspense. The soldier took a small ladder, placed it against the image, ascended it steadily, swung the axe round his head to give it force, and then cleft a gash in Serapis from his cheek to his waist. There was a groan in the crowd, as if each man drew a long breath, when the fatal blow was struck;

and still the summer sun shone calmly, and the evening breeze played softly. Besas leapt to the ground, and smote the idol so mighty a blow on the knee, that it tottered, reeled, and fell.

Still the people gazed at it, and there was deep silence, when lo! a sound, as of distant thunder, was heard inside the image. It grew louder and louder,—women shrieked,—men fell back,—even Besas himself stood aghast:—and, at the very moment of highest expectation, there issued from the neck of the image a monstrous colony of rats!

A roar of laughter pealed through the crowd; even the lip of Theophilus curled; and merely saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" he turned and withdrew, followed by his priests.

That night Alexandria blazed with bonfires; and in the stateliest of them crackled the remains of Serapis.

THE PRAYER FOR A SIGN.

A.D. 1644.

I NEVER could make up my mind whether a summer's evening were sweeter in a pasture or in a woodland country. In the one, you see the rich yellow-green light sleeping quietly on the fields—the shadows of the hedgerows falling longer and darker—the cows passing lazily through the open gate—the blue smoke of many a farm kitchen curling up—and here and there a spire in the horizon, still glowing as the landscape darkens ; and, as gradually it is shut out from sight, like a good priest going to leave the world, pointing upwards to the last. But then, in a woodland country, like our own Sussex, how lovely are those little dells in the heart of the green wood, where the oaks hang over above, and the sunlight falls in mellowed and softened between the stems, and there is a whisper all round from the sea of boughs, and the birds sing merrily out their even-song, and you may sometimes see, on the gray

rock that juts through the fern, the harmless little lizard basking away his happy evening; and may hear the puny stream murmuring pleasantly through the wood along its stony bed. Well—I think I like our own scenery best; but yet I can quite forgive those who are for the pasture country.

Let them like it as much as they may; they never could find a more lovely evening, or a sweeter country of that kind, than the evening and the country of which I am going to tell you.

It was a Saturday evening in the July of 1644. The village of Earls Soham, in Suffolk, had once been, at such a time, as merry a scene as you could wish to see. But now, a gloom seemed to have come over it. Good King Charles and his armies were still fighting, it is true, and full of hope for England and for its Church. But through all the eastern counties, and in Suffolk more especially, the Puritans ruled with a high hand: like the wicked king of old, whom they would they slew, and whom they would they left alive, and whom they would they put down, and whom they would they set up. They cast out those priests who were faithful to the Church; and, like Jeroboam, made priests of the lowest of the people.

It was so in this village of Earls Soham. Dr. Whitby, the good old rector, had lived and laboured among his people ever since the times of Queen Elizabeth; and Mistress Soham, his wife, and latterly, Mistress Alice and Mistress Margaret, his daughters, had not been a whit behind him in zeal, and in doing whatever they could for the souls and bodies of the poor. But the Earl of Manchester sent a commission to reform that part of the country. Dr. Whitby was found guilty of using the Prayer-Book; of teaching that children were regenerate in baptism; that the HOLY GHOST was renewed in them in confirmation; and other things of the like kind: so he was cast out of his parsonage, and left to provide for himself as best he might. His fine old books, the joy and pride of his heart, were some of them taken away by force, some cut to pieces out of wantonness; the furniture of his house,—simple enough to be sure,—was half of it destroyed; but with what remained, the stout old priest went to a small cottage in the village, and there established himself and his family. In the church he could pray no longer; but morning and evening, to them that would come, there were the prayers of the Church in the one sitting-room of that cottage; and he did not fail to tell his people that, let the Earl of Manchester say or do what

he chose, he was their priest still ; he must render account to God of his duties to them, and they of theirs to him.

So there, on that July evening, he was seated, and busied in reading one of the books which he had saved,—I think it was S. Bernard. His wife and Alice Whitby were in the little garden watering their plants after the hot day ; and Margaret engaged in some necessary piece of household work, and sometimes saying a word or two to her father.

“How quiet and dull,” she said, “the village is to what it was wont to be of a Saturday evening ! I cannot hear a single merry voice in the street ; and as to the old people that used to sit and talk so pleasantly in front of their doors, I wonder where they betake themselves now ?”

“So has it ever been,” said her father : “they that hate the Church, can never really love the poor. They take from them what God has given them,—their rest, and their games, and their holidays ; and what do they promise them in their stead ? They make their Sundays a burden, like the Pharisees of old ; and if God in His just anger should let this rebellion prosper for any long time, there will be such an outpouring of ungodliness after it that there will be fearful days then.”

"Well, dear father, but it will not prosper."

"So you would fain be a prophet, Margaret? Well, God send your prophecy true! Nevertheless, if to-morrow King Charles were reigning at White-Hall, and Laud, and Wren, and Juxon, and the rest, at his right hand, it would be a work of no few years to undo the harm that is done already."

"Still, father, we may hope."

"Surely; till we give up faith, we may not give up hope. But I more than fear the end is not yet. Who is that, Margaret?" For some one rapped with a stick at the cottage door.

"It is Master Whincroft," she answered;—and at the same moment, a stout, hale, honest old yeoman, his hair grizzled, but his sturdy form clearly in almost its full strength yet, came in.

"Well, Master Churchwarden!" said the rector. "I call you churchwarden still; though, good lack! it is little enough you have to do with the church—how goes it with you?"

"As well as it can in such times, doctor," said the other. "John Clark, yonder" (and he nodded towards the rectory), "has been practising for to-morrow."

"How mean you, Master Whincroft?"

"Marry, doctor, he has been praying and preaching,—I crave his pardon, exercising,—this

hour. Beshrew him for a foul-mouthed, ill-tongued, canting, hypocritical dog!"

"Master Churchwarden! Master Churchwarden! I must not suffer such words. I know not that John Clark is a hypocrite; I know he is not a dog; and I have never heard that he was ill-tongued or foul-mouthed."

"You were ever too good by half to this sort, Master Doctor," replied the churchwarden, somewhat, however, abashed. "And in good sooth there are worse than this same John Clark. Marry, he seems to doubt whether his vocation altogether was for preaching or not."

"How mean you, Master Whincroft?"

"Why, as I hear, Phil Nye, and old Lambton, and Tim Harris, and one or two more of them, were this afternoon very hard upon him as to who it was that gave him his authority for what he is going to do. And if he satisfied himself by his answers, which I believe not, he satisfied not them; for they say, that never man was harder put to it for his reasons."

"For reasons,—yes," said the doctor; "for excuses, I should fear me nay."

"Well, I know not that," answered the yeoman. "This evening, as I say, he was exercising yonder up at the rectory; and he prayed three or four times over, that if his calling here were not ac-

cording to God's will, He would give him such a sign thereof as could not be mistaken."

"Truly, I marvel he did not remember Lord Brooke's death at Lichfield," observed Margaret.

"An awful prayer, surely," said her father. "Was it much noted, Master Churchwarden?"

"Surely it was," said the farmer. "They are talking of nothing else in the village. And what Mistress Margaret said even now about that villain Brooke, has been said more than once both at the 'Earl of Manchester's Head' and the 'Lion'."

"Not," said Dr. Whitby, "that we are to draw any inferences from such a prayer remaining unanswered. God hath not bound Himself to give or withhold signs, as the fancy of man leads him to ask them. So Austin says; and it is said, as always, very well."

"If nothing follows," said Master Whincroft, "a good many waverers will be confirmed in thinking that John Clark is right."

"Then will they act both presumptuously and madly," answered the rector. "But come; leave them and him to God. He can defend His own cause, either with or without a miracle. Let us talk of something else; for 'this evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign' was not

said in praise. How the crops, Master Churchwarden?"

"Why, doctor, the proverb is true enough :

'If it rains upon Easter-Day,

There is plenty of grass and but little good hay.'

And so it will be now. The glebe is the worst of all, I think; it seems as if it knew the change."

So they went on talking about village and country matters, till twilight darkened, and Mistress Whitby and Alice came in from the garden. Then Master Whincroft was asked to share their supper: plain it was to be sure, but heartily offered, and as heartily accepted. And when the churchwarden walked through the village-street to his farm, there was deep, dewy, silence, all over fields and lanes; and the few bright stars that could make themselves seen in the pure night, looked as calmly and peacefully down as if there were neither wars nor rumours of wars over once merry England.

Sunday morning came. John Whincroft could not drive the thought of the Puritan's prayer from his mind. He had never attended a meeting on the Sunday, and he had firmly resolved that he never would; but as the morning went on, his desire grew stronger and stronger to see whatever might be seen, and he determined to go to the parish church, and remark things for himself.

He was ashamed, however, to say so ; and therefore spoke on this fashion :

" Wife," quoth he, " go down to Master Doctor's as usual, and take the children. I shall not be able."

" Not able!" cried his wife. " Why not?"

" Why, if you must know, because I have particular business."

" Business on Sunday, John!"

" Even so, wife ; and very honest business, too. Come, come : don't go on like your mother, Eve ; but leave me to my duty, and do you do yours."

Mistress Whincroft, like a good wife, made no further difficulty ; and her husband presently walked forth.

I do not know whether Master Clark held, as some of the Puritans did, that it was as great a sin to ring more than one bell on Sunday as to kill a man. However, certain it is that, though the church of Earls Soham had a fine peal of six bells, and the villagers were not a little proud of them, one only was now rung, slowly and dolefully, as if calling to a most melancholy duty. A good many persons, however, were going to church : but rather from curiosity than from any other feeling. One or two of them carried the then newly published *Directory*,—a thin, square small quarto. But the greater part went to look about

them,—to find out what the new service was like, —and to hear how Master Clark would acquit himself.

The church had been patched and plaistered after the destruction that the parliamentary visitors had made in it; and a great pulpit had been hastily set up, where never pulpit had been seen before, at the very east end. Under this was placed the so-called communion table; and round that were gathered six or seven serious-looking men,—the great upholders of Puritanism in that part of the country; who had come to inquire, as they said, touching the gifts of their brother then to be called to the ministry.

The church was tolerably full, and the tedious service of the Directory began. There was an unnecessarily long confession of sins; a chapter from the Bible; a prodigious exposition on that; and then an extempore prayer of astonishing length. At the end of this prayer, Master Clarke referred to the new office he had taken upon himself.

“And if,” he said, “O LORD, I am not called to the work of Thy ministry in this place, as certain sons of Belial have said; if I be not Thy chosen servant in pulling down idols and will worship, and setting up Thy pure and free Gospel; if I am not to be verily borne through by Thee in Thy business, nor to look for Thy reward; then, I

beseech Thee, give me such a sign as shall make Thy will in this matter clear both to me and to all, for JESUS CHRIST's sake." And the *Amen* that went through the church shewed how deep had been the attention of the congregation.

The Puritan minister now left the desk at which he had been standing, and taking his little pocket Bible, for they were beginning to publish such, in his right-hand, went up into the pulpit, his long gown sweeping the steps as he passed. He knelt down, continued a few moments silent, and then, again, began a second prayer to the same effect as before. I could easily give you, nearly word for word, what he said; I could easily make you smile at his absurd quotations of Scripture language, and the fashionable *cant* (I dislike the word, but there is no other that I can employ) of the times. But prayer is too sacred a thing, let it come from whence it may, to be thus rendered ridiculous; therefore I will only say that even more earnestly than before the Puritan prayed that, if his mission there were not according to God's will, he might have a sign. There was a hum of approbation from those who sat, in their steeple-crowned hats, just below him. The congregation seated themselves; and the Puritan preacher took the hour-

glass that stood by his side, turned it up, opened his Bible, found a text, and began.

"In John ten and thirteen it is thus written : *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.* Here, my brethen, have we the character"—the preacher paused. The congregation thought that he was frightened; that he might not be used to such a large number of hearers; that he wanted encouraging; and the Puritans beneath him hummed long and loud. But those who looked up at the preacher said that his tongue and lips were working, as if he were endeavouring to speak, but could not; that his face grew paler and paler; that he trembled; and, finally, while they were wondering what this might mean, he turned round, and began to descend the pulpit stairs.

"What ails you, brother Clarke? What is it? Are you ill? What are you trembling for?" And those who were nearest crowded round, and poured in their questions upon him.

"I will have no more of it! I will have no more of it," cried the preacher. "I asked for a sign, and I had it! I was stricken in the pulpit; and, as you all heard, I could not say one word. I thought my voice was gone for ever."

The hearers looked at each other, shook their heads, called it strange, asked what was to be

done; while the minister himself sank down on a bench, as it seemed, quite exhausted. But old Obadiah Mullins, the most thorough-going Puritan in the parish (he had taken the lead in signing the *root and branch* petition), took the matter in quite a different light.

"Come, brother," he said, "this is a delusion of the enemy, or worse. Go up, go up, and pray the LORD for strength to overcome it. Go up, and wrestle in prayer against the old Dragon."

"I cannot," said Master Clarke.

"Go up," persisted Obadiah; "or," and he lowered his voice, "the earl and the assembly shall hear of it."

At length, after being thus encouraged and threatened, and after drinking a glass of water, the Puritan, though most unwillingly, went again into the pulpit, and began.

"John ten and thirteen. *The hireling* ——" And there, again stricken dumb, he stopped. But now he made no effort against the visitation. He came down the stairs as fast as his trembling limbs would carry him.

"Go home, good people, go home," he said. "God has heard my prayer. He has given me the sign. And He do so unto me, and more also, if ever again I take upon myself His ministry in this place."

THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.

THE more truly we believe in the miracles and mighty deeds which God's saints have from one age to another wrought, the more careful we must be not to tell or receive anything as true, of which we are not quite certain ; lest, while we seek to honour God and His Church, we should unawares do dishonour to both. All the stories I have before told you in this little book really happened, and are just like any other pieces of history. That which I am now going to tell you, is probably only a beautiful legend. Many things like it, no doubt, there have been ; there very possibly may have been some such miracle : but I wish you only to hear it as an allegory, and to let it explain a saying of our Lord's : " And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

You know that the Mahometan nations which dwell along the northern coast of Africa were very

much given to piracy. They fitted out ships, they sailed up and down the Mediterranean, they attacked all vessels weaker than themselves, and they took many prisoners. These unhappy men were loaded with chains, were cruelly treated, were oftentimes put to death, and were, at all events, condemned to slavery, unless they would become Mahometans. Many a brave deed has been done for CHRIST in the dungeons of Sallee, and Tunis, and Algiers, and Morocco, of which none will ever hear, till the judgment shall be set, and the books opened. Many holy priests have dwelt with the prisoners, have toiled with them, have been with them in the dungeon, remembering when it will be said, "I was in prison, and ye came unto Me". And in Europe, many good Christians gave money in their lifetimes, or left it by their wills, to ransom their brethren from bitter slavery. There was an order of friars, called Friars of the Most Holy TRINITY, but more commonly Crutched Friars, or Crossed Friars, because they had a Cross on their breast, who gave themselves up to this holy work. Even now in London, once a year, a sermon is preached in remembrance of some Englishman who made his escape from Algiers, and wished that others, as well as himself, should have the opportunity of praising God for His goodness.

But now for my story. The citizens of Morocco

were beginning to come out, and take their evening's walk in the Great Market. Some sat in the shade of the carefully-watered trees; others lounged by the fountain *Shrob ou Shouf*, that is, *Drink and look*; others gazed idly over the plain, for a chance caravan to give them something to think and to talk about. And still clouds of smoke twirled up into the evening air from many a richly ornamented pipe; and the sherbet sellers went up and down, and drove a brisk trade. For the walls and pavement and roofs gave out the heat they had received all the burning day. There was not a cloud to be seen; a thick dust lay everywhere. It was quite a relief to turn south, and to look to the snow-capped head of Mount Miltzin. You, who have never seen the effect of a summer evening on distant snow, can little tell the heavenly transparency of the crimson in which crag and peak are arrayed. Nothing, nothing can be like it, except that sea of gold, which is also like transparent glass, before the Throne of God.

But with the infidels we have nothing to do. A group of Christians were hard at work in the centre of the square, chained like beasts to a water-cart, which ever and anon some of their companions filled from the fountain. One of them was a priest—not himself a captive; for he might have had opportunity to have returned to Portugal

the first hour that he chose. But now he desired a better country, that is, an heavenly; and he abode with the prisoners in this life, that he might attain to the glorious liberty of the sons of God in that which is to come. The big drops of sweat rolled from one and all, as they pursued their task; and every now and then a young Moor, in passing nigh them, would revile, or strike, or spit upon them.

"The day is nearly at an end," said one of the captives. "One day of misery less."

"And one more day of trial well borne, my son," said Father Luis. "Perhaps, also, one higher step gained among the 'Welladventured'."

"Ah, father," said Don Pedro de Guimarães, "much of that we feel you know; but not even you know all. We can both think of those sweet valleys of Alemtejo—beautiful Alemtejo!—that we shall never see again, Longueiros, and Aljustrel, and Feitas, and the angelus ringing out at sunset; and contrast them with this. But, oh! you cannot even guess the bitterness with which I think on Dona Felippa, and my little Ignez! how they may deem every horse-hoof on the road, every hand on the door, my return! and how I must die in this land, and never behold them!"

"I cannot, it is true," replied Father Luis, "fully enter into your grief. But there is One

That can. Of a truth you are giving up wife and children for His sake; and though in that blessed world (whereof God make us worthy!) they neither marry nor are given in marriage, yet He Himself has said it, you shall, in some manner that peradventure we do not yet fully understand, receive an hundredfold more in this kind."

"And as I have told you before," said Don Manoel de Sortelha, a young Portuguese nobleman, who was chained to Don Pedro, "if ransom comes for me, I will name you instead of myself. I am nearly alone in the world; and I am sure you will not forget me in Portugal."

"God knows," cried Don Pedro, "that I can never reward either you, father, or you, Don Manoel, for your kindness. But He both can and will."

They wrought on for some time in silence. And now a caravan, laden with Tafilet dates, passed out at the gate called Al Hhamise, and took the road to Al Kantra. The quick shambling trot of the dromedaries raised such clouds of dust, that redoubled exertions were necessary to lay it: and in the meantime, the sun set.

One thing I must notice. Fastened up to the gate Al Hhamise was a large bronze image of our LORD, plainly taken from some Crucifix; and every Mahometan that passed it, made a point of offering it some insult. Some struck it; others

spat on it; others would pick up a pebble, and cast at it. This was a sore affliction to the Christian captives; and many a plan had they devised to put an end to this wickedness. One Spanish gentleman had attempted to remove the image on a dark night: but he was discovered, and was burnt alive in the court of the emperor's palace. And so as the caravan passed out at the gate, the travellers, in every possible way, insulted the image of our LORD: and Father Luis might have been heard saying, as the last of the company left the town, "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And now the muezzins were thundering from the top of the minarets, "There is no GOD but GOD, and Mahomet is the Prophet of GOD." And the same instant all that multitude fell on their faces towards Mecca, and went through their evening prayers. The Christians rested from their labour, till one after another began to rise. And just as they were about to continue, Don Manoel uttered a joyful cry.

"What is it, my son?" asked the priest.

"Look, father! look, Don Pedro!" and he pointed towards the gate called Ailan. A Crutched Friar was riding in on his ambling mule; and behind him came two mules, laden with bags, and as many Portuguese soldiers attending them.

"Now, GOD be praised!" cried Father Luis.
"That must be a ransom."

In intense anxiety the Christians watched the parley of the friar with the sentinel who kept the gate. In a few moments a Moorish soldier went off in the direction of the sultan's palace. The Portuguese drew their mules together at the entrance of the gate: the friar dismounted, and leaving his mule with the men, came up to the prisoners.

"Your blessing, good father!"

"*Benedicite*, my sons!" said he. "I bring good tidings; I have a large ransom with me."

"Thank God! thank God!" burst from several voices. "For whom? for whom?" was the next question.

"For all, I hope," said Father Melchior, for that was the name of the new comer. "How many prisoners, I pray you, be there in the city?"

"Twenty-three in all," answered Father Luis.

"Then, God be blessed, we shall do," said the other. "I have with me eleven hundred gold crusados. Muley Ismael cannot ask more than fifty for each; and I will make him throw me the odd one in."

Tears and sobs burst from more than one of those stout-hearted men.

"Who sends the ransom?" at last said Don Manoel.

"The greater part is from our Lord João," said the friar, who, like most of the captives, was Portuguese. "Part is from Maximilian of Germany; and the rest from various houses of our own. Oh, and there is a sum from the King of England."

"*Gott schütz' den Cäsar!*" and "God save King Henry!" burst at the same moment from Sir Hermann von Löwenstein, the Pomeranian knight, and Michael Turnbull, the London apprentice, both prisoners.

"Are you sure, father, that such a large treasure is safe?" inquired Don Pedro, rather anxiously.

"Quite sure," replied Father Melchior. "The dispatch the Moor took but now to the palace, contained a warning what Muley Ismael must expect, if he behaves unfairly. He knows well enough that they who defended Mazagão and Ceuta against such odds, might, if need were, endanger Morocco itself."

"There he is," cried Don Manoel. And at the same moment, a tall fine-looking man was borne along in his litter from the mosque Al Henna; and every knee was bent, and every forehead touched the ground, as he passed.

"There he is, indeed," said Father Melchior. "I have dealt with him before now. Be of good courage, my sons; this matter will soon be sped."

As Muley Ismael drew near, the Christians also knelt ; and then, rising, waited till the sultan should speak.

"Where is the Frank," he inquired, after a moment's pause, "that has just arrived from Portugal?"

"I am he, an please your Highness," answered Father Melchior, adapting himself to the barbarous Arabic of that country, though none could speak it more purely when carrying on his labour of love in Egypt.

"Fall back a little," said Muley Ismael to the rest ; "I would fain speak of this business with the Frank alone."

The prisoners accordingly retired about thirty yards, and thence watched the conference. At first it seemed that the two could not agree ; the sultan appeared to speak angrily ; the priest to answer him coolly, but respectfully, and once even to be on the point of leaving him. Gradually, however, they agreed better ; and the conversation went on in a friendly manner.

In the meantime, the other Christians spoke of their joy and their hopes.

"I will never agree," said Don Manoel, "to leave that holy image where it is. Let us ransom it, if any how may be."

"It is well said, my son," replied Father Luis ;

"but there is only ransom enough, and hardly that, for those here. How are we to do?"

"Thus," said Don Manoel. "I will give my own ransom to that end. It is but staying a little longer in slavery; for I am sure those that go will bear me in mind."

"If you thus stay, my son, I stay with you," said the priest.

But then there was a cry that one man should not thus give himself up for all; and finally it was agreed that Sir Hermann von Löwenstein, Michael Turnbull, Don Manoel, and four others, who had no families to look for their return, should cast lots, when the matter was arranged, which was to stay, until another ransom could be sent from Europe.

Hardly was this settled, when Father Melchior came to them. "It is done, my sons," said he; "but I had a hard fight for it. Now, come to the sultan."

"Yet a moment, father," said Don Pedro. And he told the friar of their determination to rescue the image.

"It is a good and a holy deed," replied Father Melchior; "but it will cost at least one of you your liberty for the present, I more than fear. Nevertheless, try. The heart of the king is in the hand of the LORD: He turneth it as the rivers of water."

So saying, he led the way to Muley Ismael; and then, as the custom was, the prisoners knelt, and returned thanks to the sultan for their liberty.

"*Inshallah*," said he, "the next set that come to Morocco, shall not get off so easily. Omar, let a smith be fetched."

"May it please your Highness," said Don Manoel, "we have yet a request to offer. May your servant speak?"

"You may speak; Nazarene; but I have well-nigh had requests enough." For Muley Ismael was discontented and out of humour, at having been obliged to comply with Father Melchior's terms: and he had only finally agreed to them, when told by the friar that all should be ransomed, or none.

"It is," said Don Manoel, "that we may have licence to take with us the image of our Lord, now fastened to the Bab al Hhamise."

"*Mashallah!*" cried the sultan; "God is great! I will not do it."

"Will your Highness hold it to ransom?" inquired the Portuguese knight.

"To this ransom," replied Muley Ismael: "Pay down silver enough to outweigh it, and you shall have it. But where are you to get the money?"

"Have we your Highness's leave to consult about it?" asked Sir Hermann von Löwenstein.

The sultan nodded.

The Christians spoke a few rapid words to each other; and then Don Manoel came forward, saying, "We agree to that which your Highness said."

"And the money?" said Muley Ismael.

"As many of us will stay in pledge for it as shall give the full worth," replied the knight.

"Follow me, then," cried Muley. "Smith, let their chains be knocked off. Follow me to the palace; and some one bring the image also. It grows too dark to reason longer here."

In the Court of Lions, in the emperor's palace, stood the Christians, the great officers of state, the sultan, and a large body of soldiers. A hundred torches flashed in the cloisters; the curious arabesques, their burning enamels, green, blue, and gold, the delicate tendrils of the carved vine, the marbles, the precious gems, the silver, and the bronze, glittered through the twilight. The air was fragrant with oranges and heliotropes; and the crescent, that surmounted the palace, flashed in the soft light of the full moon.

In the centre of the court, a huge pair of scales was erected. The image was set on the ground hard by; and near it lay a bag of silver, into which some of the crusados had been changed.

"It must weigh forty or fifty pounds," said one of the Portuguese soldiers.

"That, at least," said his comrade.

"It will swallow up half the ransom!" cried another.

"Hush, hush!" was whispered round; "the sultan is taking his seat."

"Your Highness will swear," said Father Melchior, advancing from the rest, "to exact no more silver than will outweigh this image?"

"I swear it by the Prophet! Bendris, let the image be lifted into the scale; and let the Franks tell the money, piece by piece, into the other scale."

It was done so; and the Portuguese soldiers, throwing in piece by piece, began counting. "One, two, three, four——."

"How many of us will see home, I wonder?" whispered Don Manoel to Don Pedro.

"The sack will hardly more than outweigh the image," he replied. "But the thing is in God's hands, as well as we."

"Twenty-seven," counted the soldier, "twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty,"—

And, as he spoke the word *thirty*, the ponderous image mounted high into the air,—the little heap of silver swung to the ground.

"A miracle! a miracle!" shouted the Christians.

"There is some foul play!" cried Muley Ismael, descending from his throne. Abd Salam, look to the gates! Stand back, Nazarenes!"

The Moorish soldiers came round the scales ;— they pulled down the image by main force,—they examined, wondered, held it ;—but the moment they loosed their hold, it ascended as before.

“ *Mashallah !* ” said the sultan, at length. “ This I would not have believed, if I had not seen it with my own eyes. But I may not break my oath. Take the image, and take the money, too ; for so paltry a sum will I not meddle with.”

“ He That was sold for thirty pieces of silver,” cried Father Luis, “ hath saved us now by the same ! ”

And long before daybreak on the next morning, the Christian captives were on their road to Ceuta.

FINIS.





